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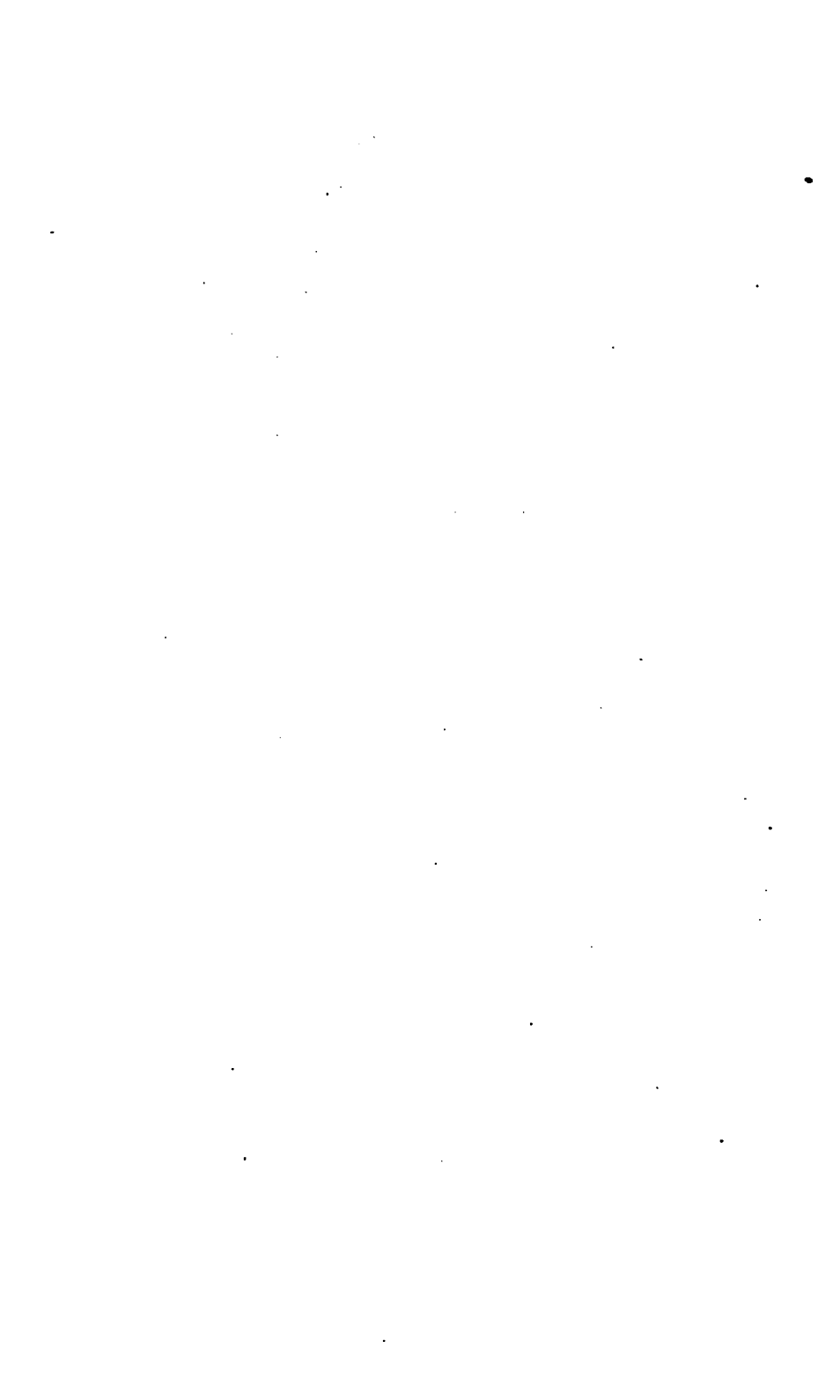


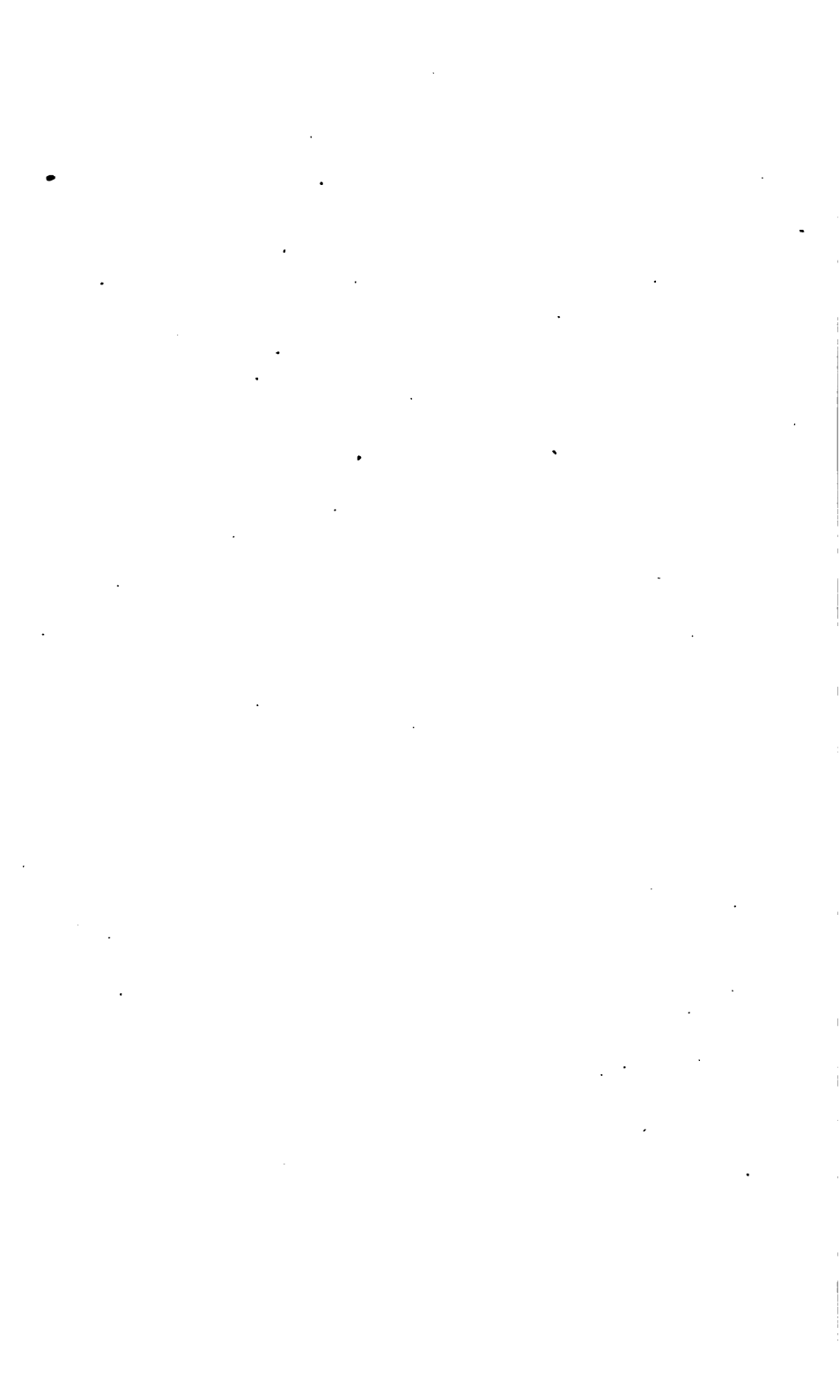
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THE
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CONSISTING OF

DISCOURSES BY THE MOST EMINENT DIVINES

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FREE CHURCH PULPIT.

SERMON LIII.

THE PROVISION MADE IN THE GOSPEL FOR THE PROGRESSIVE ADVANCEMENT IN HOLINESS, AND THE WAY IN WHICH WE MAY AVAIL OURSELVES OF THAT PROVISION.

BY THE REV. DR. MUIRHEAD, CRAMOND.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing. To shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."—PSALM xcii. 12-15

MY FRIENDS AND BRETHREN in the kind providence of God, we have lately been favoured with another opportunity of celebrating our Gospel feast; and we are this day met together to give thanks to God for what of his loving-kindness we experienced on that occasion, and to plead that the ordinance may be made effectual, by the power of his Spirit, for accomplishing all the gracious ends of its appointment; for, unquestionably, the Lord's Supper was not intended merely to minister to our comfort at the time, but to strengthen our faith, to establish our hope, and to promote in us a growing conformity to the image of our Lord. It is then, with a view of deepening any good impressions that may have been made upon your minds, and of strengthening every good purpose that may have been formed at the Lord's table, that I am to direct your attention to the words which have been read, hoping that we shall find in them a suitable subject for our meditations at this time.

There is another powerful motive to induce you to attend to these words, and to desire to make progress in the Christian life, that may be taken from the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed as a Free Protestant Church—as a Church which has been constrained, for conscience' sake, to come out and be separated from a Church which would

compromise the supreme authority of Christ, as the sole King and Head of his Church, by permitting the civil magistrate to interfere with His spiritual authority. In following the Lord fully, and showing ourselves to be evidently on the Lord's side, we are called upon to testify, by our conduct, that the principles for which we contend are vital principles, which must, and will, have a practical influence, bringing us nearer to Christ, and leading us to a closer conformity to his image than is to be expected from others. Whether, then, we consider the obligations connected with the solemn service in which we have so lately been engaged, or whether we consider the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed, as openly testifying to the Kingly power and authority of Christ in his Church, we shall find, in the words which have been read, what is fitted to animate us to diligence and perseverance in our Christian course, and to urge us forward to high attainments in the Christian life.

Now, were I to enter into a full illustration of the important matters contained in these words, I would, in the first place, direct your attention to the character of the persons here denominated "the righteous," showing that, in the Scripture sense of the term, the righteous are they who, being reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus Christ in believing the Gospel, are treated as righteous persons, being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and who, having the Spirit of God dwelling in them, are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and have a prevailing love of holiness and hatred of sin. I would show you, in the second place, the righteous are here compared to the palm-tree and to the cedars of Lebanon, because of their making continual progress in the Christian life, and because of their increasing beauty and usefulness as they advance. I would direct your attention, in the third place, to the means by which this happy change is to be effected and maintained in them, in their being planted in the house of the Lord, and their growing up in the courts of our God; that is, in their being first united to Christ, and becoming members of the Church at the time of their conversion, and then their continued attendance upon the means of grace. I would show you, in the fourth place, that there is thus provision made for their advancement in the ways of holiness, even to the end of life; so that, unlike in this respect to other trees, which generally give up bearing when they become very old, these trees of the Lord's planting bring forth fruit even to old age, and may be advancing to the last; and even when their outward man is perishing, their inward man may be renewed day by day. And I would show you, in the last place, that the whole of this provision made in the Gospel for the continued advancement of God's people, tends directly to the manifestation of his glory—the glory of his truth and faithfulness, and the perfect rectitude of the whole o

the Divine administration, showing that the Lord is righteous, that he is a Rock, that there is no unrighteousness in him.

To enter, however, upon a full illustration of all these particulars, would lead me into a field of investigation too extensive by far to be gone over in one or two discourses; but the bare mention of these particulars may, I hope, be useful for assisting you in your meditations upon this subject in private. What I purpose at present, in dependence upon the grace of God, is to direct your thoughts to two points of great importance, suggested from this portion of the Word of God. The first is the blessed security furnished to the people of God in the Gospel for their progressive advancement in the way of holiness, even to the end of life, in spite of all the discouragements, trials, and temptations that seem to oppose their progress. The second is the consideration of the way in which we may avail ourselves of that ample provision for our own establishment in the faith, and progress towards perfection. May the Lord give liberally of his own good spirit, that the souls of his people may be quickened, and revived, and made glad in his salvation; and that those who are yet afar off may be brought nigh, and being grafted into Christ the true vine, and watered with the dew of heaven, may bring forth much fruit unto God!

1. Let us contemplate the blessed security furnished in the gospel for our making daily progress in the way of holiness, even to the end of life. This security we may consider as resting on these two grounds. 1. God hath declared this to be his unchangeable purpose with regard to all his people. 2. He hath also revealed to us the means by which that purpose is to be carried into effect, and which we see to be admirably adapted for answering the purpose for which they were intended.

1. This security rests on what God hath declared to be his purpose respecting his people. The purpose is that all who partake of his salvation shall be made holy, and that their sanctification shall be carried on in a progressive manner. "This is the will of God," said the apostle Paul to the Christians whom he was addressing, "even your sanctification." Again, it is said "he hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son;" and that is, in other words, to be holy, like unto the Holy One of Israel. The salvation of the gospel, indeed, is a salvation from the power and dominion of sin, as well as from its guilt and condemnation. To be partakers of this salvation, then, is to be partakers of the divine nature, and to be holy as God is holy. And this holiness is not perfected all at once, but is to be carried on in a gradual manner. Thus it is said, "They go from strength to strength;

every one of them appeareth before God in Zion." Again it is said, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and they that have clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger;" and it is in correspondence with this arrangement that we are exhorted to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.

This progress of the people of God in holiness is frequently illustrated in the Scriptures, by beautiful and striking allusions to the progress discernible in the works of nature, as, for example, to the growth of plants and trees. Thus our Lord compares the growth of grace in the heart to the growth of corn in good ground. There is first the blade, then the stem and ear, then the full corn in the ear. Thus, in the 1st Psalm, the righteous man is compared to a tree planted by the rivers of water, which yieldeth his fruit in his season, and his leaf doth not wither. And in the portion of Scripture now under consideration, we have a beautiful instance of the same allusion, where the righteous are said to flourish like the palm tree, and to grow as the cedars of Lebanon, and to be flourishing and full of sap, and to bring forth fruit even to old age. Again, growth in grace is compared to the natural growth of the outward man. Thus we read of babes in Christ, who must be fed with milk—of those who are young men, and who must receive instruction suited to their state—"I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one;" and there are those arrived at mature age, who must be fed with strong meat. Again, the progress of God's people in the divine life is compared to a journey, where it is supposed that progress is making until there is an arrival at the end of the journey. Hence do we read of the people of God walking as strangers upon the earth, and looking out for a better country. And hence the Christian life is spoken of as a particular way of walking—as walking with God—walking in newness of life—walking in the path of God's commandments. Again, the Christian life is compared to a race, where there is not only supposed to be motion forwards—rapid motion, but much ardour of mind, and a strong desire after the obtaining of the prize. Hence we are commanded so to run as to obtain the prize. And as those running in a race do carefully disentangle themselves from whatever would retard their progress, so we are commanded to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus. Again, the progress of the Christian life is compared to the progress of light, from the faint dawn of the morning to the bright blaze of light at noon-day. Thus it is said that the path of the just is like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day; where there is suggested, along with increasing pro-

gress, increasing beauty and usefulness; for what is more beautiful or useful in nature than the light of day. Thus, then, we have the most satisfying evidence from Scripture, that it is the purpose of God, with regard to all who are called to be partakers of his grace, that the good work begun in them at their conversion shall be carried on, until it shall be made perfect in the day of Christ. Now, whatever God hath purposed we may rest assured shall be accomplished. All his plans are formed in unerring wisdom, and with a clear foresight of all the consequences. The counsel of the Lord standeth sure, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Although, therefore, we knew nothing of the means by which God intended to accomplish his purpose, yet the certain assurance that God hath formed the purpose may at once give us the most satisfying evidence of the certain accomplishment of that purpose. Hath the Lord spoken, and shall he not do it? Hath he said it, and shall it not certainly come to pass? But, for our more abundant assurance, we have only to consider what God hath revealed to us of the means by which he intends to carry this purpose into effect, to be satisfied of their being admirably adapted for accomplishing the end of their appointment, and that they shall infallibly succeed.

2. Thus we come to the second view we mean to take of this subject. Here I would particularly direct your attention to the mediation of Christ, with the accompanying dispensation of the Spirit, as the grand security for the accomplishment of God's purpose of mercy in carrying his people through successive attainments, until they shall arrive at the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The whole work of redemption is committed into the hands of Christ, and every view that is given us in Scripture of his person, his office, and his work, goes to assure us that the work shall infallibly prosper in his hand; for he hath all power in heaven and in earth committed to him, he is of unchangeable faithfulness, and, in the discharge of his office, he hath removed every obstruction out of the way; he hath made all things ready, he hath an inexhaustible fulness treasured up in him, ready to be communicated according to our need. And farther, all who believe on him are closely united to him, so that in like manner, as the branches derive sap and nourishment from the trunk of the tree to which they belong, so they are continually deriving new supplies of grace from the fulness of Christ. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing." And to this union of believers with Christ there is an allusion in the passage of Scripture now under consideration. It is said they are planted in the house of the Lord—that is, when being united to Christ, they become members of his Church, and are rooted so

deeply in the house of the Lord, that there they shall abide for ever. Observe, too, it is by the Spirit dwelling in them that they are thus united to Christ, and abide in him. And what a blessed security is there in all this for their increasing fruitfulness in works of righteousness? The Spirit implants all graces in their hearts, moulds them after the image of their Lord, renders the means of grace effectual for their good, enables them to mortify the power of sin, strengthens them against the influence of temptation, counsels them in difficulties, assists them in the discharge of duty, and seals them to the day of their complete redemption; when, being delivered from all remains of sin, they shall be presented without spot before God in Zion. Such is the provision made in the gospel for our making daily progress in the way of life. What reason have we to be thankful for such exceeding riches of God's grace towards such sinful creatures as we are? Let us remember that the very purpose for which such grace is revealed, is that we may be encouraged to run in the way of God's commandments with enlargement of heart. And let us also remember, that all these exceeding riches of God's grace will greatly aggravate the guilt of those who continue in sin, because grace doth abound.

II. We come now to the second general division of the subject, namely, to shew how we should avail ourselves of this ample provision made in the gospel for the establishment of our faith, and for our making daily progress in the way of life. I am very desirous that we should give the most earnest heed to this branch of the subject. For although the end be infallibly secured that all true Christians shall make progress, yet there are various degrees of progress, as we read of some bringing forth thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold; and generally the Christian's progress will be in proportion to the diligence and care manifested on his part in improving the means of grace provided in the gospel. I would not wish that any should rest satisfied with low attainments, when higher attainments might be reached. I would not wish that any should be straitened in themselves, when they are not straitened in the Lord. I would wish to see all making progress in some degree corresponding with the rich and abundant provision for our growth in grace that is made in the gospel. O that we may all, in waiting upon the Lord, renew our strength! With this view, let me direct your attention for a little to the following considerations.

1. Would we suitably avail ourselves of that rich provision that God has made for us in the gospel, let us often fix our thoughts on that abundant provision; and let us do so believing the declarations of God's Word, and assured that they shall be fulfilled in the experience of all who re-

ceive them in faith, and act upon that faith. It tends much to retard our progress, when this ample provision is kept out of view ; and when we begin to entertain doubts as to our encouragement to expect all needed supplies of grace. This tends greatly to weaken our hands—this causes us to become faint and weary ; and I do fear that from this cause numbers, of whom there may be good ground to hope that the root of the matter is in them, do yet make but little progress in the way of holiness. The reason is, that unbelief is secretly working in their hearts. They are tossed up and down with doubts and fears, and fall into a spiritual decay ; but did they more frequently contemplate the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel—did they really believe what God has told them in his Word—above all, did they fix the eye of their faith stedfastly on the inexhaustible fulness that dwells in Christ—they would see encouragement to expect an abundant supply of all their wants. Thus doubts and fears would be cast out—thus brighter hopes would arise and be cherished—thus God would be presented in an endearing aspect, as the God of all grace, as the Father of mercies, as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him the God and Father of all who believe. Thus may our hearts be drawn near to him in love ; and seeing it to be his purpose that his people should be daily going forward, we will be desirous that this purpose may be answered with regard to us ; and we will gladly use the means, which we have reason to hope will, with his blessing, be effectual for that end, and will cherish the animating hope that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. You see, then, my friends, of what great importance it is for entering upon your work with good hope of success, and for making progress in it, to have faith kept in lively exercise. Be strong, then, in faith, giving glory to God. Let your faith be sustained by a daily contemplation of the rich provision made in the gospel for supplying all our spiritual wants. All things, it is said, are possible to him that believeth ; and thus spake Christ to Martha, “ Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ? ”

2. Would we suitably avail ourselves of the rich provision made in the Gospel for our progress in the Divine life, then, while we keep faith in lively exercise, let us attend regularly and conscientiously upon the means of grace which are intended for promoting our spiritual improvement. If these ordinances shall be disregarded, or attended to only occasionally, you may depend upon it that ere long your leanness will be manifest, the needed blessing will be withheld, and there will be a lamentable decay of the spiritual life in your souls. Woe to those who suppose themselves to be so far advanced as to be above the need of ordinances—they are labouring under a fatal delusion—they have just

ground to question whether they have yet entered on the Christian life. Men may indeed attend regularly upon the means of grace, and yet make little progress, because they do so in a formal and careless manner. If we would expect to profit by these ordinances, we must attend upon them in an humble, serious, and devout frame of mind—we must attend upon them in the exercise of faith—we must attend upon them, believing that Christ is present in them by his Spirit to render them effectual for the ends of their appointment. Thus may we hope that we shall find it good for us to draw near to God in the ways of his appointment, that in reading and meditating on his Word, our faith shall be strengthened, our hope established, and our minds more enlightened; that, in drawing near to the throne of grace, we shall experience that God is the hearer and the answerer of prayer; that, in waiting upon ordinances, we shall find that our hearts are made glad, our views of Divine things are enlarged, and all the warmest affections of our hearts are called forth in gratitude and love to our God and Saviour. My Christian brethren, have you not found it so in your own experience? How delightful was it when, in your attending upon ordinances, God was pleased to lift upon you the light of his countenance! This put gladness into your hearts, more than could be enjoyed from the greatest abundance of earthly good things. Then you found a day in the Lord's courts better than a thousand. Then you loved the habitation of God's house and the place where his honour dwelt. And when it was otherwise with you—when you were in a cold and dead state of mind—when the face of God was hid from you; then, perhaps, you could trace the sad reverse to some neglect on your part, in your not attending upon ordinances with due preparation, and in a suitable frame of mind. In a word, ordinances are admirably adapted for the ends of their appointment; but they are often attended with little benefit, because we do not look beyond them to Christ for the blessing which alone can render them effectual. For we must never lose sight of this, that neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.

3. Would we suitably avail ourselves of the rich provision made in the Gospel for our progressive advancement in the spiritual life, then, while we have faith in lively exercise, and are regular and conscientious in attending ordinances, we must set ourselves without delay to engage entirely in the duties of the Christian life, and to do so heartily, as to the Lord, and to do so in the exercise of faith, believing that in the inexhaustible fulness of Christ there is enough and to spare for all—grace suited to our state and circumstances, whatever they may be; and here, I fear, lies the great difficulty with us all, that while we acquiesce in the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and believe in the rich provision

that is made for supplying all our wants, and attend upon those ordinances whereby all the principles of holiness may be cherished and strengthened; yet, when it comes to the discharge of duty, when all these principles should be called into exercise, there should, after all, be such sad shortcoming. In nothing, perhaps, have we such convincing evidence of the remains of sin in the hearts of believers, as this seeming inconsistency between their profession and practice, and the little correspondence there is often between their actual progress and the advantages enjoyed by them for making progress. Surely such things ought not to be. What more could we expect that God should do that he hath not done? Why, then, are we so backward to improve the advantages we enjoy? I am aware that new supplies of grace alone can overcome our spiritual sloth and the other obstructions that oppose our progress. But, since all the grace that we need is ready for us in Christ, let us, depending on that grace, get up and be doing—let us live under an abiding impression of God's presence—let us keep habitually in view a regard to the glory of God—let us cleave steadfastly to Christ—let us seek more earnestly the gracious influence of the holy Spirit, that sin may be mortified, that grace may abound, that every thought and imagination of our hearts may be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Let us be careful to improve the time, to avail ourselves of every opportunity of usefulness; let us not seek our own things, but the things of others; let us put away from us all sinful anger, and malice, and wrath, and let us put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, loving one another with pure hearts fervently. Thus, my brethren, in setting ourselves in earnest to the work in dependence on the grace of God, we have encouragement to hope that we shall succeed. Thus, while other young men become faint and weary, and while other youths do utterly fall, we shall, in waiting upon the Lord, renew our strength—we shall mount up with wings as eagles—we shall run and not be weary—we shall walk and not faint. Thus, in the language of the text, “we shall flourish like the palm-tree, we shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” Thus, being planted in the house of the Lord, we shall flourish in the courts of our God. We must still bring forth fruit in old age, we shall be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright. “He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.”

And now, my friends and brethren, I bid you all farewell, and I do so in the words of the Apostle Peter—“But the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LIV.

THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE RESPONSE DUE TO THIS LOVE.

BY THE REV. ADAM FORMAN, LEVEN.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—1 JOHN iv. 10.

THE Apostle had attested, in a previous part of his Epistle, the signal record "God is love." Whatever is sacred to goodness—whatever is pure in compassion—whatever breathes benignity, that finds its plenitude in God. It is a fine, yet faithful, record of Jehovah which represents him as one grand concentration of love. The Apostle pursues this theme in its development in the annals of human redemption. He recognises there the most stupendous manifestation of the Divine benignity. Going as it were to the climax of Heaven's generosity, he taxes language to express its transcendence; and, under the full inspiration of his theme, he exclaims, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

In further prosecution of this subject, we shall observe a very simple method. I shall speak

I. Of the love of God; and

II. Of the response due to this love by man.

I. In referring to the love of God, as exhibited by the Apostle, there are a variety of aspects offered to our notice; and

1st, There is the fact that the free, unbought love of God, is the source of human redemption.

It is a glorious and inspiring fact, that the free, unconstrained love of God, is the source of human redemption. There is the more occasion for representing this truth, because there obtains often in the minds of men great misapprehension in regard to it,—a misapprehension, it is to be feared, associated with confused and erroneous notions of the gospel. Because Christ is said to "have procured gifts for men," it is therefore imagined that the love of God flows not towards mankind in a free, or gratuitous channel. Now, confronting any such disparaging idea stands the transcendent fact that God's bosom was the birth-place of the whole

scheme of salvation. Scripture lends its emphatic testimony to this aspect of the truth, "When there was no eye to pity and no hand to help, God's own eye pitied and his arm brought salvation." "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son for it, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." It is manifest from these passages, and others again which might be adduced, that God's love was the fountain head of all spiritual benefits to man. It was *his* pity, *his* yearnings of mercy, *his* ineffable compassions, which projected a scheme of grace for man, which arranged it, which provided its expedients, which undertook its results. We are not to imagine that the love of God was a *product* of redemption—it was the *main-spring* of redemption. The love of God was the well-spring of which man's immortal hopes were the issue. It was the grand master principle, of which redemption was the practical platform. It dedicated itself to the benefit of man, seeking to overcome difficulties, to surmount impediments, to adjust discrepancies, to reconcile antagonist claims. Love was the initiative of redemption—redemption the expositor of love; and it is interesting to verify this truth in connexion with all the persons of the glorious Trinity. You are aware that the entire Godhead is represented as embarked in the enterprise of redemption. The Scriptural disclosures introduce us to an august transaction of Deity, ratified in the high counsels of eternity. The Father commissioned the Son, the Son dedicated himself, the Holy Spirit lent his benign and adorable concurrence to the act. Now, putting the question with the reverence with which any question should be applied to so high and holy a mystery, but putting the question on the strength of Scriptural discovery, what but free, gratuitous love, could account for the several aspects of the transaction. If the Father gave his Son, what else than matchless and free compassion for the lost, prompted the act? If the Son consigned himself, what else again than Divine and disinterested compassion for the lost, prompted the act? If the Holy Spirit contributed his august and gracious adhirence, what else once more than infinite and benign generosity towards the lost, prompted the act? We have, in point of fact, the glorious Godhead, lavishing itself as it were in the impulses of one infinite and surecharging heart of compassion, for perishing man. Love to man, reigning in the heart of the Godhead—love to man, inscribed on the counsel of the Godhead—love to man, lettered on the administration of the Godhead—love to man, emanating in the whole movements of the Godhead.

But, not to anticipate, this conducts us to a second particular inviting

illustration,—viz. the *matchlessness* of the Divine love, as demonstrated in the mode of its expression.

The mode which God's love has adopted for its expression, is significantly but briefly conveyed in the language of the Apostle, "Not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And there are two elements which, at the very threshold, put themselves forward as imparting complexion to the Divine love. The first of these, though the less signal, is yet pre-eminent enough to challenge our devout recognition,—it is conveyed in the words of the Apostle, "Not that we loved him but that he loved us,"—words which, simply interpreted, seem to involve that the love was all on the side of God; and the affecting fact is ushered to our notice, that the Divine compassions addressed themselves to the emergencies of man, while the human heart was harbouring unmitigated inveteracy and hostility towards God. Yes, when man was warring, in impotent, indeed, but unrelenting enmity against God, the Divine step of reconciliation approached him. Heaven, gloriously belligerent, lifted as its weapons for the contest, the armour of mercy. In array against the antipathies of the human heart, were marshalled the transcendent mercies, the superabounding grace, the exquisite compassions of God. Love was matched, as antagonist against enmity—fornication antagonist against un-dutifulness—generosity antagonist against ingratitude—tenderness antagonist against obduracy—pity antagonist against scorn—loving-kindnesses antagonist against perversity—mercy antagonist against malignity—God, the grace-asserting God, came over the mountains of human provocation, and planting his foot where the misconduct at once and the misery of many were alike rampant, reared the trophy of his infinite tender mercies, to subdue the one, and to banish the other.

But to transfer ourselves to the other element illustrative of the matchlessness of the love of God, it is to be found in the fact, that he sent his Son on the errand of our redemption. It is obvious, that it is the love of God the Father, which the Apostle specially represents. I am aware that there is an unfathomable mystery associated with this page of Deity. The full imports of the fact involved in the words, "The Father sent his Son," the mind of man cannot, with all the aids which it can command, comprehend. But yet are there notices of Scripture which, linked with certain significant analogies, lend some illustration to the theme. I do not mean to allege, that the parallel of an earthly parent consigning a beloved son is to be applied without necessary qualifications to Deity. But yet, if Scripture represents the love of God upon the strength of this analogy, it is difficult to understand how the mere

profoundness of the subject should forfeit to us the benefit of the illustration. And I submit, that the sacred page at large, when representing the love of God, places it in confederacy with the case of a fond earthly father, consigning a darling son. Who can have forgotten the tribute of fondness involved in the language, "I was from everlasting the Father's delight?" Who can have forgotten the Apostle John's record, "who was in the bosom of the Father?" Who can have forgotten Paul's testimony, "He was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person?" Or who can have forgotten God's own attestation, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" Or again, to refer to passages which express directly the magnitude of the love involved in the Father's consignment of the Son, are they not fraught with most emphatic meaning? "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son for it." "He who spared not *his own Son*, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent *his only begotten Son* into the world." Thus is the love of the Father toward mankind exhibited in aspects of most touching significance. It is to be represented, that men very generally entertain some estimate of the devoted compassions of the divine Son, our Saviour. His acts of costly renunciation in leaving his original glory are interpreted—are properly interpreted—as pledges of infinite love. But it may be submitted, if a like costly renunciation is not implied on the part of the Father, in consigning *his delight* from everlasting, to the obscurity, and rigours, and ignominy of a rejected and despised condition. Who can tell what is involved in the Father devoting his beloved Son to the sore travail of man's redemption? And let me take occasion to represent how much the love of God becomes enhanced when contemplated in this medium. Why, my brethren, supposing the honour of Jehovah had admitted of the gifts of salvation being conferred without any mediatorial intervention, how comparatively slender had been the expression of love? These gifts, precious, unspeakably precious to us as they are, own no such costly character as does the consignment of the Saviour. They are simply benefits implying compassion, grace, generosity, indeed, but benefits disbursed out of that infinite treasury of his fulness, which can suffer no exhaustion. But the cost at which the Father devoted the Son, and the cost at which again the Son subjected himself to the hidings of the Father, are trophies which involve a far different, a far more stupendous manifestation of Deity. They impart a magnificence, a height, and depth, and length, and breadth of dimension to the love of God, which rear it to supreme elevation among the transcendent glories of the Eternal. It was invoked.

ing the Spirit of this view that an Apostle penned the words, "He who spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." It was under the influence of the same magnifying estimate that he again uttered the language, "Thanks be to God for his *unspeakable gift*." And it was inspired with the same lofty apprehensions, and ravished with the stupendous contemplation, that John was forced to exclaim, "Herein is love, that God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

But this conducts us to a third particular inviting illustration,—viz., the signal issues of the Divine love, as it achieved a propitiation for sin. The obvious idea of propitiation is rendering the Divine being propitious; and the question may be raised, and more especially after what has been said of the infinite freeness of God's love—How should there be any occasion for an intermediate vehicle to his favour? It is felt, indeed, by some, in virtue, no doubt, of obscure and imperfect views of truth, as if the intervention of a Mediator compromised the disinterestedness of the Divine love—implied a limitation in its freeness—involving a price for its exercise. Now, it were enough towards obviating these objections, to suggest that, as love was the main-spring of redemption in the Divine mind, so God himself originated the whole method of redemption—God himself reared the frame-work of salvation—God himself supplied all the materials. Yes; if a Mediator was required, the Godhead furnished that Mediator—God himself undertook the task. If a commissioner of mercy was to proceed to our world, the Godhead furnished that commissioner—"it was God manifest in the flesh, who tabernacled among men." If a substitute was to be found for transgressors, the Godhead furnished that substitute—it was God who obscured his glory in the garden, at the judgment-seat, and on the cross. If a propitiation was to atone for sin, the Godhead furnished that propitiation—it was "God who bought the Church with his own precious blood."

The question then, in effect, is, What necessity that the channel of Mediation should be the vehicle in which the Divine love transmitted itself to man? And there seems a key furnished to this question, in a statement embraced in the epistle from which our text is chosen. In one passage of that epistle, God is said to be love, and we have already illustrated this particular. In another passage, he is said to be light; and this involves a characteristic as essential as the former. God is purity as well as love—rectitude as well as relencings—righteousness as well as peace—justice as well as generosity—truth as well as tenderness—inviolability as well as forbearance—immaculateness as well as mercy. Now, this implies a necessity for a vindication of holiness,

as well as an illustration of grace. In point of fact, God cannot exercise any attribute of goodness, except in consonance with rectitude. He cannot be clement without being just—he cannot be benign without being true—he cannot exercise any prerogative of mercy, except in confederacy with unsullied holiness. God's love must be seen to be a holy love—God's mercy, a righteous mercy—God's compassion, a pure compassion—God's grace, a spotless grace. Thus, then, it is—the love of God, taking direction towards mankind, did not overbear the vestiges of righteousness, and truth, and justice, obliterating, in a venal and licentious exercise, all that is sacred to the purity and probity and faithfulness of Deity. It applied itself, by a system of righteous expedients, to enlist all these attributes of God into confederacy with it. Itself a mighty stream, it lessened not, but augmented its volume, by taking along with it, as its auxiliaries, other mighty currents, all flowing in parallel channels of the Divine glory. The immaculate purity of Deity—his unswerving rectitude—his unbending integrity—his transcendent uprightness—were to pour themselves in magnificent confluence with the unfathomable tide of his love. The mercy of God, aggrandized by accession of the righteousness and justice and truth of God, is that stupendous concentration of the Divine generosity which the gospel presents. Instead of love being contracted by this alliance of attributes, it is infinitely expanded. Yes; we point in the gospel to a love which was not expenseless in its exercise; we point to a love which undertook the cost incurred to infinite justice; we point to a love which undertook the reparation due to infinite holiness; we point to a love which undertook all the charges of violated law; we point to a love which satisfied the demands of infinite truth; we point to love, in short, in the embrace of all the other Divine attributes, magnified of all—the darling, the crowning trophy of all—love, in the foreground of the divine glories, ushered to her pre-eminent reign by her partner excellencies of righteousness, purity, and truth—a confederacy, a lovely conjunction of Divine attributes, of which the language of Scripture furnishes the most beautiful portraiture—"Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other"—each attribute, in fact, shedding its own special lustre upon the entire combination, but all, whatever the minuter aspects—all over-spread with one harmonizing, mellowing, benignant halo of infinite love.

There is, then, in reserve for us, the single remaining element of this marvellous theme, *that a propitiation has been made.*

We approach a field of heaven's loftiest mystery, when we advert to the vicarious obedience and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was

a problem which no creature could have solved, how the righteousness of Deity was to harmonise with the love of Deity in extending clemency and complacency to transgressors. And it is a problem, which even yet outmatches created mind, fully to comprehend the dimension, the length and breadth of that wondrous propitiatory expedient, which was to adjust to the exercise of Divine mercy the moral system of the universe. We can only catch a few glimmerings of the truth, as it lies wrapt up in the deep mystery of a Saviour's expiation. But it is enough that God himself has proclaimed that expiation, all-sufficient. It seems as if the original question just comes to this, Shall God have the glory of interposing for his perishing creatures at all? Then, as respects the mode of interposition, his word intimates that reparation by a substitute was quite consonant with the intrinsic excellencies of his character, and with the moral administration of the universe. But, beyond all this, we grasp another exponent of the theme, in the mysterious fact of a union of the Divine with the human nature in the person of Christ. Among the many purposes to be served by this article of revelation, none is more obvious than as it seems to furnish a resting-place to the mind, on the question of the efficacy of the Atonement. We have only to take along with us the record "God manifest in the flesh," to impart a new dimension to every outline of redemption. Immediately you give the stature of Deity to every act, both of a Saviour's obedience and sufferings. And we may well conceive what a magnificent reparation to dishonoured righteousness it must, to the mind of celestial natures, have appeared, when Christ entered on his mighty enterprise. They had seen towering finite natures prostrating themselves before the supremacy of Divine law, as veiling their faces with their wings they cried out, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts." But now they saw the holy Lord God himself walk forth on the moral platform of the universe on the errand of lending compensation to his own dishonoured law. If the most exalted creatures of God—if angel and archangel had amassed in one vast pile, throughout eternity, their pledges of obeisance to the Divine law—they would not have amounted to any such magnifying tribute as this. They would still have been the finite revenue of mere created beings. One action of God is infinite. If angel and archangel had rendered the forfeit of violated righteousness, throughout eternity, it would not have constituted any such vindication of the sanctions of law, as the penal sufferings of Christ involve. It would still have been the mere limited retribution which creature penalty can supply. One judicial compensation of God is infinite. It is in respect of moral dimension as it is in respect of physical might. If you should propose to match against infinite power the puny energies of collective created

agency, what would the lists involve? Deity antagonist (if such language may be presumed)—Deity antagonist against the feeble arm of created might. And what, in like proportion, is the character of God's moral feats, as compared with those of man? Is not the answer, infinitude. And, travelling to that mysterious tribulation which a Saviour underwent, we may well appreciate that it must have required Divine might to sustain it. It is a delightful pledge of the love of Christ, which every passage of his devoted history supplies. But it is also a tremendous voucher of the ordeal he had to undergo. We overlook altogether the vitals of the case, if we confine our eye to the outward inflictions which Christ endured. No doubt his literal humiliation was great, and asserted enhanced value, as it involved the condescension of Deity—no doubt his privations were extreme, when, less favoured than the foxes who have holes, he had not where to lay his head, and wore a more marvellous character, as they contrasted with the native prerogatives of Deity—no doubt his contumelies to which he was exposed at the instance of sinful men, were galling and ignominious, and fraught with additional aggravation that they were offered to the person of Deity. But it is not in the outward detail of a Saviour's sufferings, that their intensity is to be ascertained. To interpret the propitiatory love of Christ, you must go to the brink, for further than the brink you cannot go, of that profound abyss of his tribulations, which God only knows, and which God only can interpret. Yes, beneath a veil more impenetrable far than the night which hung upon the Mount of Olives, was there a controversy shrouded, which could only express itself in the language, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"—an agony which bathed itself in a sweat like "great drops of blood—a mortal poignancy, which exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The dire portents of that season—its tossings, its mortal throes—wrung the exclamation from the Son of God, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" its intense adversity bespoke Divine intervention—"there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him."

II. And now I feel warranted to transfer myself to the second more prominent aspect of our subject, namely, the response which is due on the part of man to these matchless displays of the Divine love. I think it must be apparent to the least reflecting mind, that the matchless grace of God infers a corresponding welcome on the part of the sinner.

And first, I remark, it is by faith that we embrace the propitiation of the gospel.

The Scriptures at large declare that the benefits of Christ's expiation

can only be derived by those who reciprocate to its design—that is, who confide in its efficacy. And the warrant for this reliance is furnished in the copious overtures and guarantees of the gospel. I do not feel called on, at present, to speak of the link which, as the special intentions of the Divine mind were concerned, the atonement asserts with the elect. This refers itself to the province of those secret things which belong to God, and enters not as any element into the composition of man's responsibility. I speak of the revealed things which belong to us and to our children, supplying, as those revealed things do, the materials which determine man's responsibility under the economy of the gospel. And here I have no difficulty in saying, that the invitations are as universal as sin is universal. Here I have no hesitation in representing, that the gospel is exhibited in the light of one grand capacious fund of saving benefit, to which *all are invited*, and *resorting to which, no man shall find inadequacy of resource*. It is in respect of the provisions of grace (venturing an analogy, as in such cases we ought always to do, with the delicacy due to a sacred theme), in some kind, as it is with the provisions of nature. The sun is a source of light and heat, inviting us to disport ourselves in his gladdening beams. But would it abridge the glory of that luminary, if some infatuated mortal, shutting his eyes, should say, there is no light for me? The bounteous earth yields her treasures for the sustenance of all who would cherish life; but would it contract her munificence that some perverse or parsimonious individual should say, there is no food for me? The copiousness of ten thousand fountains may pour itself over mountain and valley; but would it impair its exuberance that some demented self-tormentor should say, there is no drink for me? The beauty of innumerable gems of the vegetable domain, of flowers of every tint, may spread itself a rich carpeting over the face of nature; but would it diminish either their variety or loveliness of hue that some morbid or morose ascetic should aver, the fields provide no charms for me? No. The light is there, whether you admit it or not—the plenty of the earth is there, whether you partake of it or not—the cooling stream is there, whether you quench your thirst at it or not—the loveliness of nature is there, whether you have taste for it or not. And so we say, in respect of the spiritual aspects of the case, the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with brighter splendour than ever did Nature's sun, and with more benignant healing under his wing, and there he shines and smiles whether you will admit his gladdening influences or not. The bread of life has come down from heaven, plenteous and nutritive enough for the life of the world, and there it offers its aliment, whether you will partake of it or not. The fountain of living waters has been opened, and there it

transmits its refreshing streams, whether you will drink of them or not. The Rose of Sharon has blossomed and yielded its odours, and there it spreads its bloom, and there it sheds its fragrance, whether you will enjoy them or not. And O, I would appeal to you, what fearful perverseness must be involved where the plenitude of heaven's mercies is practically made void. It is indeed a vain imagination that any benefit can accrue to a man when there is not an effective concurrence on his part with the earnestness of salvation. You may have a man buried in gloom even when the sun shines—you may have a man perishing of hunger even when the earth spreads out her plenty—you may have a man the victim of a cynic and acerb disposition, even while Nature is lavishing her beauties around him, and challenging by her jocund landscape a response to her own jubilant hilarity; and so you may have a man the wretched thrall of sin, though Christ came to put away sin; though the acceptable year of the Lord has been proclaimed—the year that is to give deliverance to the captives, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house—though there is a virtue in the blood of Jesus which cleanseth from all sin—and though the grace that is treasured in Christ be an exhaustless centre of all that can brighten or gladden the spiritual history of man. Yes, in the very nature of the case, you must have salvation recognised before it can be realized; for consisting, in great degree, of moral benefits as it does, it can only be secured by moral appropriation. How, for example, could peace of conscience be inherited, if a man did not believe in a provision made for the guilt that burdens conscience? How could confidence be cherished towards God, if a man did not believe in a basis of reconciliation with God? How could a man partake the bliss of communion with God, if he did not believe that there was a way opened by the blood of Jesus into the holiest of all? How could the hope of glory animate the soul of any sinner, if he did not believe that even the abodes of glory were accessible through the mediatorship of one who has entered the Heaven of Heaven's itself as the precursor of his redeemed people. And O, what is not lost where such circumstances are involved! Is redemption offered, and are you not to embrace it? Is an expiation made, and are you not to hallow it? Has a Saviour finished his work, and are you not to seek its benefit? Is a full, free, infallible salvation awaiting your acceptance, and are you to disown, are you to forego it? Is paradise regained, and are you to seal your exclusion from it?

But I would seek to reinforce this appeal by a second suggestion deriving itself from our subject—That the costly characters of the propitiation of God bespeak a corresponding dedication to its benefits,

The stupendous fact that the Godhead provided the victim of expiation—that he who owns the title of the blessed, and only potentate, came himself forth on the enterprise of our redemption, impresses a sublime and awful emphasis on salvation which challenges the anxious homage of every soul. It cannot fail to force itself upon every mind, not steeped in the deepest lethargy of spiritual death, that the interposition of a *Divine* propitiation gives witness of two things; first of the fearfulness of the doom from which he came to deliver; and, secondly, of the entire forfeiture of hope if he be disowned. I put it to you, my brethren, could it be from a trivial doom that the *Son of God* interposed to deliver? Is there not a dimension given to the second death, which nothing else could affix to it, when we contemplate the ever-blessed Jehovah himself incurring the cost of ransoming from sin? Ah, yes, the language of our blessed Saviour gave often emphatic and awful attestation of the fearfulness of the wrath to come. "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" was his language of portentous remonstrance in reference to coming perdition. "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do; but rather fear him who when he hath killed is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." "There is a worm that dieth not, there is a fire that shall never be quenched." "It had been better for a man not to have been born than that he should come into this place of torment." These are a few of the premonitions equally urgent and awful which he, who knew the elements of despair, poured upon the ear of wayward and perishing sinners. But, far more emphatic still is the *speaking fact*—for it speaks what volumes could not express—that he "who was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person became the expiation for the guilty—"gave his soul an offering for sin." Every detail of his marvellous history has a voice, and that voice lifted to one effect. His mysterious incarnation, fraught as it was with infinite condescension, lifts the voice, *fearful is the wrath to come*. His profound humiliation, consigned as he was to the lot of earth's poor ones, lifts the voice, *fearful is the wrath to come*. His grinding hardships—homeless, shelterless, persecuted—lift the voice, *fearful is the wrath to come*. His arduous, his indefatigable ministry, pursued from city to city, and from village to village, lifts the voice, *fearful is the wrath to come*. His tears, shed in contemplation of the fate of perishing sinners, lift the voice, *fearful is the wrath to come*. His deep, his incomprehensible travail in the garden, lifts the voice, *fearful is the wrath to come*. His cry of unutterable anguish on the cross lifts the voice, *fearful is the wrath to come*. And surely, if the doom be fearful, it must also be apparent to you that you cannot

escape it if you reject such a Saviour ; for this is the other aspect presented to our view in connexion with the costliness of the gospel propitiation. If you reject so glorious a Saviour, where are you to find another ? Or think you that, after having given such tremendous demonstration of his indignation against sin as the history of the Redeemer furnishes, God will extend a venal indulgence to continued and incorrigible transgression ? Think you that he who proclaimed " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," will single out, as the sin most commended to impunity—despite, rejection, dishonour, offered to Christ and his precious salvation ? Ah no, my brethren ! we cannot disown the Saviour, without our guilt taking the dimension of his super-eminent attributes. It takes, in some sense, the stature of the Godhead ; it takes the compass of his blood ; it takes the compass of his sufferings ; it takes the compass of his tears ; it takes the compass of his meltings and compassions ; it takes the compass of his cries of agony ; it takes the compass of his devoted death ! Yes, it is a " crucifying of the Saviour afresh ;" it is " the putting him to an open shame ;" it is a " treading under foot the *Son of God* ;" it is a " counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing."

But this appeal acquires reinforcement from a third element associated with our subject,—*that infinite love* bespeaks fervent response from us.

The love of God challenges our homage. And such a love ! Whether we contemplate it, as it dwelt from eternity in the Godhead—whether as it took expression in the transcendent mission of a Saviour—whether as it found expression in his devoted life, in his fervent compassions, in his boundless generosity, in his affectionate solitudes for man, in his unparalleled sufferings, in his devoted death—in all is love signeted in form so divine and glorious, that it cannot dictate less than the sentiment which the apostle *laboured*, but could do no more than *labour*, to express in language, when, in the depth of his admiration, he exclaimed " herein is love !" And I take you to witness that, if you reject the Saviour, it is *love, infinite love* against which you offer offence. The controversy is no longer with the mere authority, the righteousness, the law of God. The controversy now is with Divine love itself. It is mercy, infinite mercy, against which the hostility points itself. Yes, my brethren, the love of God stands suing as it were with a last and longing appeal to you to be reconciled to him. And, let me ask, if you shall say we will not be reconciled, what interpretation must your conduct wear ? If, love itself defied, you shall maintain the posture of inveterate enmity, where, where in all the compass of the Divine nature, shall be found one other resource for the sinner ?

Where, where if, flinging yourself away from the embrace of mercy, you rush on to your ruin—where shall you find a refuge that will harbour you? It is not in heaven, for the love that was dishonoured on earth will not be profaned of you in heaven. It is not in the bosom of the Godhead, for that bosom has been derided in the compass of its mercies already. It is not in hell, for hell though it *may* be, though it *must* be, your portion, if you condemn the gospel, offers, alas, no refuge. The love, the love which you abjured on earth lifts up no smile in hell, either inviting your confidence or provoking your scorn.

SERMON LV.

THE GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. ROBERT FORBES, WOODSIDE.

"Gather my saints together unto me."—PSALM l. 3.

THE term *saint* is an exceedingly honourable one. It is given to those of whom the world is not worthy, and who, how despised soever when on earth, shall be finally exalted to wear the crown of life, and tread the streets of the New Jerusalem. In recent times, the term has been often used as one of reproach by the men of the world, so that it is not uncommon, when a person stands forth for Christ and his cause, to hear him called, by way of derision, a saint. Now, when the world, in ridicule, uses this term in reference to such an one, it speaks sober truth, and, instead of being accounted a reproach, it ought to be reckoned an honour; and those thus branded, should try, even in a greater degree, to deserve the appellation in its real sense, by living less to the world and more to Christ. A saint means a holy person—one who, though naturally unholy, has undergone that great change by which the seeds of holiness have been sown, and the principles of a new nature have been imparted—a saint is one in whose body the Divine Spirit dwells as his living temple, and in whose soul Christ has reared his throne. Saints may differ from each other in many things, but they all agree in the possession of love to Christ and holiness, and to Christ's people, ordinances, and word, and in the manifestation of hatred to all sin, and a continual longing desire to be delivered from every evil work, and to be presented faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy.

The saints are very dear to God. He that touches them, touches the apple of his eye. He that persecutes them, injures him. In the text, God calls them *his* saints—"Gather *my* saints together unto me." They are his, for he has chosen them from before the foundation of the world, and has paid for them the ransom price of the blood of his eternal Son. They are his, for he spares them as a man spares his own son who serves him, and he will finally receive them to his own blessed residence. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day

when I make up my jewels." How high then the honour, how great the privilege, of being a saint of God! Little does the world think of these things, when in derision it uses the term. To be a saint, is to be associated with those who have loved and walked with God from the first of time—to be banded with Enoch, and all the worthies of antediluvian times—to be associated with Job, and all the excellent of Patriarchism—with Abraham, and all the redeemed of Judaism—and with Isaiah, and all the prophets. It is to be associated with Paul, and all the Apostles—and to possess a resemblance to the spirits of just men made perfect—and, above all, to bear the image of Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant—and to have a good hope, through grace, of spending an eternity with all these in the world of clearest light, and purest love.

The text, my hearers, speaks about God's saints. It mentions them as a collective body, and it issues a command from him to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, to gather together his saints unto himself. Are there saints present? These words, my friends, deeply concern you. Are there those present from whom pious relatives have been removed by death? These words concern you too; for they tell of the destinies of those you loved on earth. Are there those present in whom the desire is enkindled to be saints of God? These words concern you too; for in them are to be seen the present condition and future prospects of God's holy ones. Are there those present who bear no resemblance to the saints of God? These words concern them also; for they show them from what happiness and glory they are excluding themselves—for when all God's saints shall be gathered together unto him, it shall be said to them, "Depart, ye cursed." And once more, are there any present trembling between hope and fear as to whether they are God's saints, and fearful lest they be too unworthy to be cared for or saved by God? These words tell them that the meanest, humblest believer shall not be absent from the gathering. He that issues the command is omnipotent and omnipresent. His command must be obeyed—"Gather my saints together unto me."

Our intention, my hearers, in the remaining part of this discourse, is to describe the nature of this gathering of the saints unto God, and then to mention an inference or two that may be deduced from the subject.

I. *The Gathering.* "Gather my saints together unto me." It is obvious, from these words, that the saints were previously at a distance from God; for they are said to be gathered *unto him*. It is clear also that the text supposes them to be scattered the one from the other;

hence the command, "*Gather my saints together.*" These two points furnish us with the true nature of the gathering implied, which we shall present under two observations.

1. *The saints are gathered unto God by grace.* We have already remarked that the saints are by nature at a distance from God, but they are brought nigh to him by the blood of Christ. Formerly they were strangers and foreigners, but now they have become fellow citizens and of the household of God. The saints of God belong to every different part of the world. There is scarce a clime in which they are not to be found. There are some dear to God living under the burning sun of Asia and Africa; and there are those whose hearts have been warmed by Divine love, inhabiting the snowy regions of the North. The saints are also of every variety of the human race, and of every complexion. There is the white European, the red man of the West, the sable aborigines of Africa, and the dark-complexioned and delicate Asiatic. Grace makes no distinction between them. It rejects not the black man to take the white, but from all these classes it gathers a people together unto the Lord. And all these, forming a countless multitude, of every nation, and clime, and tongue, and people, are gathered unto God—are clothed upon with the righteousness of his Son, and fed with the bread and water of life. They come by grace to sit at the feet of Jesus, and to learn his word. One wish animates them all—a desire to know more of God and his Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

The one great agent, my hearers, by whom this gathering is effected is the Holy Spirit—without him sinners would remain at a distance from God—without him they would not even desire to be saints. He it is that sweetly yet powerfully draws them to Christ, and persuades and enables them to look to him as all their salvation and all their desire. None can resist his call. The hardest heart is broken—the most alien will is turned—the coldest affections are warmed—and with one heart and soul the poor outcasts flock to Christ as doves to their windows for safety, for refuge, and salvation.

The Spirit of God, however, in thus gathering God's saints to himself, makes use of a varied instrumentality. In some cases the saint is brought to God by a painful occurrence, which withdraws his thoughts and love from the world, and gives him leisure to think of the realities of eternity. In other cases he is brought by bodily sickness, which leads him to see the short and uncertain tenure by which he holds all in this world, and the necessity of securing a better, even an eternal portion. Then, again, the saint may be brought to God instrumentally by the death of relatives, leading him to see how vain is every human consolation, and how necessary is it to be always prepared to meet God. Numerous other instruments might be mentioned, but there is one which he uses far oftener than any

other—the preaching of the Word. He appoints heralds to go through the world, proclaiming that the kingdom of God is at hand. He sets apart persons to blow the trumpet of alarm and of jubilee, and vast multitudes hear and obey, and flock to God. The great proportion, we believe, of those gathered by grace Divine, within the pale of Christ's Church, have been collected instrumentally by the preached Word. That word, it is promised, shall not return void—it is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. Brethren, who among you have been gathered by grace unto God? Let every one put the question—"Am I among the number?" Have you been led to feel yourselves poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked, and have you come to Christ to get all your sins pardoned, and all your wants supplied, to be clothed upon with his righteousness, and to be sanctified by his Spirit? We fear there are those present who must confess that they are yet at a distance from God, and strangers from the covenants of promise. Sinners! we are commissioned to blow the trumpet of alarm in your hearing, and to invite you to flee to Christ—the only refuge for the guilty. Why will ye stop back? The storm is coming on apace, and there is no shelter out of Christ. The flood of Divine wrath is coming—oh, why will ye not lay hold of a plank of the ark as it floats by? Why, O sinners, why will ye die? Come to Christ for pardon, for light, for holiness, for eternal life. "The Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

2. *The saints are gathered together in glory.* We have seen how grace gathers the people of God into one Church, and unites them to Jesus their living Head. Now, glory gathers them to one bright home above, whence they shall no more go out. This gathering commences at death, and is completed on the resurrection morning, when the saints, in one vast company, shall ascend, soul and body, to the New Jerusalem, to be ever with the Lord. We read that Jacob, when he had made an end of commanding his sons, "gathered up his feet into his bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." The phrase for a moment sounds strange, when we recollect that his beloved Joseph, his fondly cherished Benjamin, and the children whom he loved, were all standing around his bed, and by his death were separated from him. What, you are ready to exclaim, can this be a union and a parting at the same time?—can this be a gathering to his people, when his people are left standing on the brink of the river of death, and he alone is permitted to cross it? Ah! my friends, you mistake. The dying Patriarch, it is true, left some of his weeping kindred behind for a short season, but he was departing to a far greater multitude of them—he was going to a larger and a nobler assembly, even to the general assembly

and Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. True, he was separated for a little from some of the beloved objects of his earthly affections, but he was going to meet his pious forefathers—Abraham and Isaac—and he was going to see his beloved Rachel, at whose early tomb he had mourned. He was going to join the pious of former ages—Abel and Seth, Enoch and Noah—and comparing their number with that of the little band from which he was separated for a time, he might well be said to be gathered to his people. And, my hearers, if the phrase be justifiable in the time of Jacob, when the general assembly and church of the first born was thin compared to what it is now, with how much greater force does it apply to the dying believer now, when he ceases from his labours, and enters upon his rest? What though he leave behind him a few weeping friends? he is going

“Where his best friends—his kindred dwell—
Where God his Saviour reigns.”

What though he leave a few mourning fellow believers behind?—he is going to a larger, a nobler, and a better society—he is going to his spiritual kindred, and to those to whom he bears a closer relationship than earth can tell of—he is to be gathered to holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles—to the noble army of martyrs—to the spirits of just men made perfect—and, above all, he goes to join God his reconciled Father, and to see Jesus his elder brother. Here he is in a small and comparatively dark room of his Father's house, but he now goes to another and more spacious apartment, where not merely a few of his people, but where the worthies of all times are assembled—an apartment which needs no sun nor candle to enlighten it, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof.

Now, beloved, if saints be thus gathered together to God at death, how much more gloriously will the text be fulfilled on the resurrection morning, when the bodies of believers shall burst the manacles of the tomb, and when soul and body they shall ascend, a countless company, to the realms of eternal glory! What a bright and glorious gathering shall that be! No dark river of death shall then roll between the believer and those whom he loves—but all shall be united—all gathered unto God. Methinks the great trumpet, as it peals forth through the universe awakening the sleepers in Jesus from their long slumber, proclaims the very words of our text, “Gather my saints together unto me.” Listen to the thrilling description which Christ himself gives of the interesting but tremendous scene: “Immediately after the tribulation of these days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of

Heaven, with power and great glory ; and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other." Do you ask the number of this company ? Go with the beloved disciple to the gate of New Jerusalem, and look through its open portal, gaze upon its golden streets, and behold its inner sanctuary, and you will agree with him in his account of what he saw. " And I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And I saw no temple therein ; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it ; and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof ; and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it ; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there."

II. *Inferences.* There are two important inferences, beloved, that we shall deduce from the words of which we have been treating.

1. *The unity of Christ's people.* Christ's people are one. Saints of different names on earth, and saints in heaven, form but one communion. How delightful the thought that the believer, while treading this vale of tears, is one with all his fellow believers on earth, yea, and with the redeemed in yonder sinless world, and that a few years at most and he shall cross the narrow streamlet which separates between him and them, and be united to them in reality, as he is now in spirit ! What differences there are here among the people of Christ !—differences of clime, and language, and manners—differences in denominational observances ; and yet these are utterly lost sight of, when we reflect on the things in which they agree. They are all the subjects of grace divine. They agree in loving one glorious Saviour—in bearing his bright image, and reflecting his likeness. They are washed in the same fountain, sanctified by the same Spirit, admitted into the same family, partakers of the same privileges, and heirs of the same eternal glory. Oh ! why, then, should they fall out by the way ? Why should they dwell so much on their little points of difference, and so little upon the vast, overwhelming, glorious realities in which they agree ? Why, beloved, should we hesitate in giving the right hand of fellowship to those whom we expect to meet in glory ? Let Christian love descend and abide among us—let it infuse its lovely influence over our souls, and shed across them the peace and happiness of heaven !

2. *The final meeting of Christian friends.* Various causes combine to separate on earth those who are thus really one in Christ Jesus. We have already adverted to denominational differences; but there are physical as well as moral causes. Thus, distance may separate dear Christian friends—oceans may roll and continents intervene between those who are one in affection and one in Christ. The separation may be painful, but it is designed in infinite wisdom. God sees fit to spread his people through the earth, as he scatters the stars through the expanse of heaven, that they may be more extensively useful than if clustered in one bright spot, while every other part is left in darkness. Sometimes, perhaps, the Christian may be separated in providence from those he holds dear, so that he has none of kindred spirit to associate with—none with whom he may take sweet counsel on his journey to Zion. But all is done in infinite love, and all will work together for good; and this partial isolation will make the final meeting more sweet—it will heighten the joys of re-union in that place where believers shall no more go out. Friends in Jesus will there meet never more to be riven asunder. The missionary will there rejoin the friends from whom he parted for the sake of Christ and perishing souls, and at the head of his little band of converted heathen, will enter those mansions where his redeemed kindred dwell, and so be ever with the Lord. But finally, death separates Christians. The little circle of Christian friendship is invaded by the destroyer, and broken. It is closed again; but by repeated inroads it grows less and less, till the aged believer is left almost alone “like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.” The warm greetings of sanctified affection no longer meet the ear. The place by the fireside is vacant—the chair is empty—the much-used, much-loved Bible lies unopened on the table, all proclaiming that there is a sad, sad blank, and a feeling of desolation and loneliness steals across the soul, as it recalls former joys gone to return no more. Well, the breach has been made, the blow has been struck, the bonds of affection have been riven asunder, but in a little while there shall be a blissful re-union, the believer shall meet his friend not as when he parted, with the damps of death resting on his brow, and the dimness of death chasing its wonted expression from the eye, but invested with a glorious and spiritual frame, unsusceptible of decay, and unapproachable by the last enemy. Yea, and as he marked the smile that lighted up the countenance of the departing one in the moment of dissolution, he regarded it as a pledge of the joy unspeakable into which the disembodied spirit was immediately ushered, and as pointing to the undying happiness which friends in Jesus shall enjoy together when they meet to part no more.

SERMON LVI.

THE OBLIGATION ON CHRISTIANS TO DEPART FROM INIQUITY.

BY THE REV. W. H. BURNS, KILSYTH.

"Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."
—2 Tim. ii. 19.

THE *context* refers to certain errors and heresies which, at that time, troubled the Church; and the *text* points out the comfort, and also the practical lesson suitable to the circumstances. Errors and heresies of various kinds, do, alas! still both infect and infest the Church, but it is a great comfort to God's people that the unbelief of men cannot make the promise of God of none effect. Though the faith of some may be overthrown, yet the foundation of God standeth sure. It is not possible that they should deceive the elect. And, most assuredly, all the attacks which the powers of darkness have made upon the doctrine of Christ cannot shake it; it stands firm, and weathers all the storms which have been raised against it. The Prophets and Apostles—that is, the doctrines of the Old and New Testament—are still firm; and they have a seal with two mottoes upon it. One speaks our comfort—that "the Lord knoweth them that are his"—*knows* them, that is, he owns them—so knows them that he will never lose them. None can overthrow the faith of any whom God hath chosen. The other motto speaks our duty—that every one who names the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. Those who would have the comfort of the privilege, must make conscience of the duty. If the name of Christ be called upon us—if we be called by the Christian name—we must depart from iniquity, else he will not own us, but will say, in the Great Day, "Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." What can be more plainly and undeniably incumbent? What can be said against it? What argumentation does this text admit of? Where is the man who will contest the point, and who will say, "I am the man who have named the name of Christ, and yet I do not think myself bound to depart from iniquity." There is no person here who will come forward to make such an averment. Yet, so strange

and inconsistent a creature is man, that there is nothing more common than to *do* in fact what no one will be fool-hardy enough to defend in words ; there is nothing unusual in that which ought never once to occur—namely, the same person to be *this* day naming the name of Christ in the most public and solemn manner, and next day practising iniquity ; one day at the Lord's table—a few days after at the table of devils ; one day engaged apparently in all that is holy and devout—another day a partaker in revellings and abominable idolatries ; on the sacramental occasion seated at the table of the Lord, with the awful symbols of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus in his hand and in his mouth, as it were with uplifted hand swearing allegiance to the Holy One and the Just, covenanting with the great I AM to be *his* only and for ever—and the next week, or the very next day, in another company, at another table, yet in reality before the same Omniscient Jehovah, in utter contempt of his authority, or at least in complete forgetfulness, if not denial of his title to homage—taking back every promise he had made—violating every article of his solemn engagement—saying, in fact, “ Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice. I am still my own ; I am free as if nothing had passed.” O ye enemies of the cross of Christ, read, I beseech you, the description of your character—look at your own likeness as drawn by the Apostle, Phil. iii. 19, and acknowledge the resemblance, although it be indeed very unlovely—“ Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you *even weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

Yet the foundation of God standeth sure, whatever errors in doctrine may be broached from time to time, pestilential as they are, and overthrowing the unstable belief of some. The ground of faith stands firm and immovable. The Church of God is founded on eternal truth, and supported by the promise and oath of Him who cannot lie. The Apostles are represented as twelve foundations, but the doctrine of all of them is the same, namely, “ Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” And this seal is fixed on the very ground-work, the very first layer, as it were, of the eternal holy building—“ Jehovah knoweth them that are his, and therefore let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

A figure with an inscription was no unusual thing on a foundation-stone in ancient times. In Zechariah's prophecy, chap. iii. 9, we read, “ Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua ; upon one stone shall be seven eyes : behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” It seems, however, that the Arabians had no figures upon their seals, but

only an inscription; and the Jews, it is most probable, after the Babylonian captivity, were in like manner without any images, and would have none represented upon their seals. It was, therefore, natural to put some inscription on each side. Here one of the inscriptions is nearly in the words of Moses to Korah and his rebellious company (Num. xvi. 15), for terror to foes, and comfort to the friends of God, "Jehovah will shew who are his." The other inscription is nearly in the words which follow (v. 26): "Depart from the tents of these wicked men." Apostasy and rebellion, departure from the truth of God, and opposition to it in principle and in practice, have, alas! been common in all ages and under every dispensation.

The context, as we have already observed, refers to heretics, namely, Hymeneus and Philetus, who denied the resurrection of the dead, and thus taught Sadducean errors, and opened the flood-gates of iniquity; and their criminality being greater in proportion to the dignity against which they offended, although immediate judgment might not be executed, yet it was certain. Whatever may be the vacillation of men's opinions, however far they may depart from the foundation, and attempt to build up systems of folly and sin, the grand building of truth and of mercy shall endure—shall last through all ages—its foundation deep on eternal truth—it points upwards—it is for ever settled in heaven—and it has ever the same characters and marks of divinity and perfection.

In farther opening up and endeavouring to apply the subject before us, we purpose, in humble dependence on Divine aid, to attend to the import of that part of the inscription which refers to the "naming the name of Christ," and then to enforce its practical application.

I. On the foundation-stone, as it were, of the Church of Christ, is inscribed on *one side*, the comfortable assurance, "The Lord knoweth his own, and will make manifest in due time that they are *his*;" on the other, what is admonitory and evidential of relationship to the great Head of the Church. Now, my friends, every professing Christian does name, the name of Christ, and is called by his name, even as the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch; nay, even before that naming at Antioch, every believer in Christ—every one baptized into his name—was virtually so called. And we may say, as every pupil or disciple of the various schools and sects of philosophy acknowledged the master, and assumed the name of the school to which he belonged; and as the soldier wore the badge of the commander, and of the corps to which he was attached; and as idolaters had the name of the idol-god whom they worshipped upon their hands or upon their forehead; so, in like manner, in a far higher and in the most eminent and religious sense, every Christian

shewed *his* school, the company, the corps to which he belonged, to be that of Christ Jesus the Lord, whose name he bears, and into whose service he has been admitted. At baptism, if adult, the naming of the name of Christ was your own act and deed; like the Ethiopian mentioned in Acts viii., who, after professing faith in Christ, at his own request was received by baptism, as declaring his faith and public engagement on the Lord's side. Or if you have been baptized in infancy, ere you could possibly know the import of what was done, still, while the deed is not abjured, it remains in force, and has all the binding obligation of a personal transaction in adult years. The name of Jesus is virtually named by you every time you own or answer to your Christian name, or *subscribe* your name, and so long as you have never abjured the name, or declared your wish to have no part nor lot with Christians. The possession of privileges surely binds us to certain corresponding duties, even although the privileges were not of our own personal choice; just as life, and reason, and civil advantages, under a regular administration, and a Bible, and a Sabbath, and religious education, though not of our own choice, do most certainly lay us under very important obligations. Let those seriously consider these things, who neglect the Lord's Supper, supposing that they are quite at liberty to act as if they were their own, because they have never homologated the deed of their parents by their own act. You are not, as you flatter yourselves, free of the guilt of those who name the name of Christ, and who yet depart not from iniquity. The retaining hold of iniquity in any form, or remaining its willing captives, makes your case very criminal and dangerous, even irrespective of the laws of Christianity (for all are under the law of God by their creation, as rational and accountable creatures); but guilt is highly aggravated by your birth and upbringing in a land of light, within the pale of the visible Church. You, moreover, still retain the name, and yet refuse to follow out what that name imports. You must be known sometimes either as friends or as enemies of God and of his Son. Those, indeed, who do come to the table of the Lord, make a more solemn and public profession of discipleship, and name the name of Jesus more deliberately and explicitly. You have called Christ Jesus your Lord in the most public manner; and if you act in a manner inconsistent with your profession, you sin more presumptuously and with aggravation, yea with a high hand. You eat bread in token of closer friendship, and yet lift up your heel against the Lord's anointed. It would be dreadful to think that the very table of the Lord should be filled with his enemies, dishonouring and betraying him, instead of paying him homage. Would you ever expect to meet with a man's enemies at his own table? Surely that is the very last place you would expect

to meet them. But perhaps you say, that you just do what custom and decency require—that, as a good subject of government, you wish to shew respect to the religion of the State ; and so, if in Turkey, you would be a Mahomedan ; and if in Rome, you would adore the Host, pray to the Virgin, and do homage to the Pope. Thus you would always be in the fashion, and never run any risk of being persecuted for your religion. But true and false religion—the service of God, and of Satan, and of Antichrist—can never be made to harmonize. The naming the name of Christ is a proclaiming war with every other religion. Christianity is a spiritual religion, requiring the head, the heart, and the life to be engaged in its service. It is not like the religion of the heathen, all outward—the external rite performed, no more required. The religion of Christ is a religion of principle, of daily and practical influence ; and this accounts for its being so little to the taste of natural men. Other religions just exact *so much* of time, and of money, and of genuflexions, and ritual observance, and it is done ; but Christianity, if received at all, is *in the heart* from first to last—makes there its lodgment, and never quits possession. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It is not merely a new name, or new habit, but a new principle, a new nature. It is the reign of God within us. Christ formed in us the principle of grace—the worship of God in the spirit—the constant moving spring and regulator of the heart and life. This constitutes its real excellence. Here is where its great strength lies, as a participation of a divine nature ; but this is just the reason why it is disrelished by the carnal, and deteriorated by Popery and will-worship, to render it more palatable, and to enable its mere professors to appear to do a good deal, and yet excuse themselves from giving the heart, and so making a clear and full departure from all iniquity.

But still your profession of Christianity—your coming to the table of the Lord—says you believe in Christ, and desire to be accounted his disciples. If you come just as the heathen come to their festivals, see that you follow out the meaning of what you do commemorate ; be just as consistent as the heathen and as the Papists are in their false religions. All nations walk every one in the name of *their gods* ; they glory in their religion—they have a resemblance to the objects of their idolatry—faithful copiers of the vices of their favourite deities. O that you were as consistent ! Then would you walk in the name of the Lord, rejoicing in his name every day, and exalted in his righteousness.

Having thus endeavoured to shew what naming the name of Jesus implies, let us now

II. Press upon you, departure from all sin.

This we have been so far doing already, for it is impossible to illustrate in any degree what it is to name the name of Christ, without in some measure anticipating this second branch of the subject. But more particularly consider,

1st, One great end of the religion of Jesus, is the destruction of sin, and the encouragement of holiness. Can any one doubt of this? Can the most superficial examination of its terms, and language, and ordinances, leave any one to doubt of this? I appeal to the testimony of enemies, of wicked men, and of evil spirits in proof of this. Why has the gospel been so hated and opposed? Why has the world always been hostile to the Spirit and practice of the gospel, and done every thing to impede it? Why has our own Church, the more pure, vital, and spiritual it became, been just the more dishonoured and disavowed in high places? And why, when the gold is become dim, and the very life is almost extinct, and consent given to be a mere piece of subserviency to worldly rules, is the old system protected and favoured; and all classes of worldly politicians agreed to hate, and in a measure to persecute, the better part which has separated and come out? The answer is, the law of Christ's house is holiness—the statute-book of his Church is the holy Bible. Why, let me ask again—why is the gospel which abounds with blessings—which makes such cheering discoveries, and is inscribed and surrounded with “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men,” not immediately and universally received so soon as proposed; and why is it not long ago the religion of the world? The true account of this is, the gospel gives no toleration to sin, but strikes at it root and branch—sounds an alarm in the ears of ungodly men—summons them to answer at the bar of conscience, as a prelude to the bar of future judgment, why they go on in sin. It cries aloud and spares not. It makes no concession nor compromise, but threatens everlasting destruction on every impenitent and on-going transgressor. This, therefore, is the condemnation that light hath come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Does not this evince, beyond all controversy, that to name the name of Christ is just to carry on a war with sin—to break up connection with all the patrons of ungodliness, to form a close alliance with the most holy, and to be followers of God as dear children.

And, from the whole current of prophecies, types, and positive declarations of the great Author of the Gospel, is it not undeniable that the destruction of the works of the Devil was the grand end of the wondrous dispensation? The very first announcement of the Gospel intimated the crushing of the Old Serpent's head by the seed of the woman, and the warfare commenced betwixt the Serpent's *seed* and the *seed* of

the woman, which never can be settled but by the utter subversion of the former. The enmity cannot be reconciled—it must be destroyed. The name of the promised Deliverer is *Jesus*, because he “saves his people from their sins.” His sermon on the Mount shews that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil and establish it. The blessedness he opens up is that of the humble, the pure in heart, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, and the persecuted for righteousness’ sake. In publishing his Gospel in the synagogue at Nazareth, he offers emancipation from the thralldom of sin when he opens the book of the Prophet Isaiah, and applies to himself and to the design of his mission, “deliverance of the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to the bound.” The Messiah is cut off, but not for himself, “to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” The initiatory rite of his religion is washing—the emblem of purity, so that over the entry to the Christian temple is inscribed, in large characters, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” The other ordinance of the Supper expresses devotedness of heart and of life to the honour and service of God, and binds all its observers to “present themselves living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, to God, their reasonable service, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds.” The Spirit promised is the Spirit of holiness—the book of direction is the Holy Bible—the companions to be associated with are a holy nation and peculiar people—the road and high way marked out is the way of holiness, over which the unclean cannot pass—the heaven he prepares and promises is the high and holy place, and its exercises, and joys, and society, all most holy—nothing entering in that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. How powerful the conclusion in favour of the departure from sin of all who name the name of Jesus, when we thus consider the nature and the end of his religion!

2d, If any spark of gratitude be kindled in your hearts to him who hath given himself for you, to deliver you from this present evil world, and to bless you in turning every one of you from your iniquities, and who hath done this at such an expensive rate, redeeming you not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood, surely you will depart from all iniquity. Can you run in the face of your best friend and benefactor by cherishing his enemies and murderers? Is this your kindness to your friend, to abet the most open and strenuous rebellion against his laws and government—to labour to put down what he came to establish and set up—to cherish what he laboured, and bled, and died to overthrow and destroy? Do you dare to name the name of Christ, the Holy One and the Just, and at the same

time give any, the least, countenance to that, to overturn which cost him his heart's blood—*his life*—which he laid down that he might bring us to God? Surely, surely, if your heart be in the right place, you will feel the melting, the constraining power of the love of Christ, “who loved the Church, and gave himself for it, to sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word;” so that you will at once judge, and feel, and live as those who are no longer their own, but his who died for them and rose again. Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?—have you within your breast any spark of that holy flame?—then the love of Christ will be in you, and will operate upon you as the most powerful and generous, drawing, winning, and powerful persuasive to hate all that *he* hates—to love what he loves—to copy what he exemplifies—and to run with alacrity as he shows the way. “If ye love *me*, keep my commandments;” “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;” these are among the last words Jesus Christ addressed to his disciples; let your hearts and your wills interpret them. They are to be *felt* that they may be *understood* and practically applied. O may the love of Christ be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us!

3d, Again, the credit of religion, regard to the honour of Christ, should lead you to depart from all iniquity. Every one professing to be a Christian must, in consistency, desire to promote the influence of the Gospel, to recommend it to the approbation and reception of all in his immediate circle, and as extensively as possible. Every sincere Christian prays earnestly and daily that the kingdom of Christ may come, and must, in consistency, labour to diffuse far and wide its salutary and blessed influence, that all may bow before the Lord Immanuel, and that all nations may serve him. If you be sincere in your religion, you will most assuredly shew yourselves on the Lord's side, and “come to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” You will not leave it to be a matter of doubt or uncertainty to which side you belong. Your *deeds*, however, must shew, as well as your lips and your sacramental action, that you have indeed been with Jesus. O beware of inconsistency! “Only let your conduct be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ.” O disgrace not your profession of a most holy faith, by an unsavoury conversation or practice—either change your *name* or your *conduct*. It is said of the Pythagoreans, an ancient sect of philosophers, that they used to send a coffin to unworthy members who had disgraced the sect, intimating that they were considered as dead and gone. Surely *they* that are Christ's are bound to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. But, alas! what wounds have been inflicted on the name and the cause of Christ by inconsistent professors of religion—by their bad tempers, their pride, their avarice, their worldliness, their excesses in meats and

drinks, their low and carnal aims! How many may have been hardened in their infidelity, or encouraged in their carelessness and irreligion, by the glaring inconsistencies in the lives of professors! How many children and relatives of such unworthy representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ have been fatally prejudiced against the truth, or at least have used as a pretext and defence of their ungodliness, the hypocrisy of such unsound professors; or, which is equally hurtful, and perhaps more hopeless, have been led, by their example, to adopt the same erroneous and low views of religion! And so error is perpetuated and extended—the triumph of truth impeded—the word, instead of being caused to run and be glorified, is arrested in its progress—the name of Jesus, instead of being honoured, is blasphemed among the heathen through you professing Christians, who should have been living epistles of the Lord Jesus, known and read of all men. What would you say—how will you answer it in the Great Day, when it will be asked by the Lord, What have you done for me?—What example have you set?—How have you promoted my cause?—when it turns out that, in fact, you have pierced the Lord of glory, and put him to an open shame—that you have proved a snare and a stumbling-block in the way of men's believing the Gospel—and that the superficial and careless ones have taken their notions of Christianity from the copy you have set them, satisfied with resembling, or even coming in any degree near, that very imperfect, nay distorted representation of it, which they have seen in your conduct? O consider, my dear friends, how many may be thus blinded, misled, prejudiced, perverted, ruined! That which is wrong is sure to be imitated, while lines of a fairer character may be overlooked or reversed. How important the Apostolical exhortation to "walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well pleasing, fruitful in every good word and work!"

Finally, if you would maintain your peace of mind, and your good hope through grace, and have the first part of this text and motto secured—"The Lord knoweth them that are his"—see that the second part of it which we have been illustrating, be fulfilled and carried through, even "departing from all iniquity." "Justified by faith, we have peace with God;" and, beyond doubt, if the faith be genuine, it will introduce a continued and a growing joy, liable, no doubt, to some interruptions or variations from many causes. But one most obvious and prevailing cause of the suspension or diminution of peace and joy, is the not following out fully the Christian character—in not departing from iniquity in every degree and form. If any sin be indulged in, it shews that the Gospel has never been truly embraced, destroying and disannulling the claim to the Christian character, and to the possession of

hope and of joy—it shews the profession and baptism to be like that of Simon Magus, who remained still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, his “heart not being right in the sight of God.” Talk not of your evidences, and of your hopes of heaven, ye who are not purged from your old sins. Ye Ethiopians—ye slaves of sin, accustomed to do evil—unchanged in your character, uncircumcised in heart and ears—say not that you are Christians or Christ’s, seeing that you have not crucified the flesh! You must not, with the mark of Cain upon you, lay claim to the faith and acceptance of Abel. With unmortified lusts, and sin reigning over you, how can you think to rank among Christ’s friends, or claim an inheritance among the sanctified? You, who would be justified and saved by the Gospel, will you not hear the Gospel? “Repent and be converted every one of you.” You would wish the peace of God’s children, will you not consider how his children are characterised, that they are like their Father and Elder Brother; each resembling the children of the King of Saints? Ye who would enter heaven, and obtain part in the first resurrection, O see that you follow holiness, and that you keep the commandments, for the gate of heaven is too narrow to be entered by the unmortified and unrenewed man. The society and exercises of heaven are too pure and exalted to be suited to the taste of the lovers of sin, and of this present evil world. How are you ever to obtain admission there, unless a great change be produced on your character, and principles, and desires, and habits; and this is not to be expected to take place just in the transition from time to eternity. Death has not any such power—the grave possesses not any such refining process. As you die, you shall be found at last. “He that is unjust shall be unjust still; he that is filthy shall be filthy still;” while “he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is righteous shall be righteous still.”

O be ye roused to serious consideration, ye who are naming the name of Christ, and yet making no progress in the subjugation of sin, but still living after the flesh. How can you sleep in your beds so quietly and profoundly, when you may, in your unconverted state, awake no more in this world of hope and of opportunity, but where mercy is gone for ever. Awake to righteousness. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and begin not to say, we have named the name of Christ—we have eaten and drunk in his presence; his word has been heard in our Churches, read in our houses, and we were never refused a token, nor called in question. What if after all it should turn to be a delusion, when the great day of decision is come? O, my dear friends, think most seriously and immediately of these things—for the matter admits not of delay, nor of dispute. The way of duty, of safety, and

of peace, is not in any respect left doubtful. There is no uncertain sound uttered by the gospel trumpet. There is no diversity of roads to heaven. There is one foundation of God's Church, and which standeth sure, and one seal and inscription upon it, if marked on two sides, yet in complete harmony—the one a counterpart to the other—"The Lord knoweth his own"—and "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The law of the house is "holiness to the Lord." Therefore, be ye holy, as your Lord and master is, and as the sequel of the exhortation to our text expresses it, "be ye vessels, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, prepared to every good work. Flee, also, youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord, out of a pure heart."

But if there be, as we fear, some present who lend a deaf ear to every argument addressed either to consistency, or gratitude, or hope, or fear, connected with the naming the name of Christ, inasmuch as they make no kind of religious profession at all, but rather make it their boast that they make none—their only hope, if hope it can be called, being drawn from this, that they are *no hypocrites*—to such we would say, by your own shewing, you are open and avowed rebels against the Lord and his anointed—your sins go before you to condemn you. At best, you can expect no better than to have your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. It is written, "Behold ye *despisers*, and wonder and perish!" These who call on the Lord, but falsely and feignedly, will most assuredly meet with a sad repulse; but what better, if not worse, awaits those who do not make any, even the least, approach to the language or spirit of contrition, but with daring effrontery, glory in their open and avowed neglect and contempt for all that is true, and venerable, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. If the painted hypocrite is utterly rejected, what shall be the reception of the shameless profligate? If the decorous Pharisee, with all his righteousness, cannot be saved, and if even the righteous *scarcely* be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Stop, therefore, poor sinners, stop and think! "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver." Seek for mercy at the throne of grace. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed and only blessed are they that put their trust in him." O! encouraging words, "*Whosoever* calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!"

Ye who have not now, for the first time, named the name of Christ, but have, it may be, amidst many various scenes of trial, been enabled, through grace, to maintain the character of good soldiers of Christ, not being ashamed to acknowledge him as your Lord, but rejecting the

thought of glorying except in his cross, be strong, faint not. Fight the good fight, so that ye may finish your course with joy, in your life and in your death glorifying him.

And if there be among you those who have lately put on Christ, yielding yourselves to the Lord, and entering into his sanctuary, boast not as those who are ready to put off their armour. But, as said Paul to Timothy, in this very chapter, so say we, "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Be not discouraged by any afflictions which may befall you, for his name which you bear is an honourable name, and it is a "strong tower to which you run, and are safe." Yours is the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. The Spirit of Christ, of which you are partakers, is the Spirit by whom you are strengthened with all might to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Be followers of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Every age has furnished bright examples of faithfulness, even to the death. We conclude with citing from the history of the Church one very pleasing illustration: In the African persecution, under Hunneric the Goth, one Majorinus, a fine young man, being brought forth to suffer for the truth, was thus addressed by his pious mother:—"Remember, O my son, that we were baptized in the name of the sacred Trinity; let us not lose this precious garment, lest, when he comes, who called us to the wedding, he find us without any wedding garment, and we be cast into outer darkness." This so strengthened him, that he endured to the end, and suffered as a blessed martyr for the truth!

"Be thou faithful unto death, and he will give thee a crown of life."

SERMON LVII.

THE COMMON BOUNTIES OF PROVIDENCE—A WITNESS IN ALL AGES AND IN ALL COUNTRIES FOR GOD.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM GRANT, A.M., MOULIN.

"Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons ; filling our hearts with food and gladness."—Acts xiv. 17.

In the bounty and goodness of Divine Providence, as expressed in this verse, the Apostle adduces an universal witness for the existence of God, and the benevolence of his nature. The occasion of the words, which was a most interesting one, is related in the preceding context. Paul and Barnabas, persecuted and driven from Iconium, fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, preaching the gospel. Meeting at Lystra with a man who had been lame from his birth, Paul performed a miraculous and effectual cure upon him, with which the inhabitants were so struck, that, regarding the apostles as superior beings, they cried out, "The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men ; and they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker." The priest of Jupiter himself, catching the spirit of the multitude, was preparing with the people to pay divine honours to the apostles, when, in the true spirit of God's servants, thus evinced on all similar occasions, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, "Sirs, why do ye these things ?" They assured them that they were only creatures like themselves, and possessed of the same common nature with them : that, although they had not come down from heaven, as they vainly imagined, they were the bearers of a message which came from heaven—that although neither the one was the chief of the gods, as they imagined, nor the other their messenger, yet they were both the accredited messengers of the living and the true God, who had sent them to preach to them, that they should turn from their vanities to the living God, the Creator of all ; and that the miracle which they had just witnessed, was by derived power from God, in attestation of their Divine message and mission—Verses 14-16,—“Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” You will observe that the walking of the nations in their own idolatrous ways, was by

sufferance or permission, not of *necessity*. Their thus walking was wilful and inexcusable, inasmuch as God had not left them without the means of knowing him as the Supreme, as the *sole* object of worship, for he had not left himself without a witness among them. This is the reasoning of the Apostles in the language of the text—Verse 17, “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

In discoursing from these words, I purpose, in dependence upon Divine aid, to attend for a little to the great doctrine of the text; viz.—the common bounties of Providence, a witness in all ages and in all countries for God. By the Divine blessing this may be as profitable, as it is suitable to the occasion of our present meeting.* Let us then humbly look up for the Divine guidance and blessing while thus engaged.

To proceed then: “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness.” God has preserved among all nations a threefold witness for himself.

I. The works of Creation witness for him. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works!” says the Psalmist, “in wisdom hast thou made them all.” O yes, contrived in wisdom, formed by power, sustained and preserved by the continual exercise of the same wisdom and power combined, they ever witness for their Divine Author. They proclaim his existence, his perfections, and his praise. They render utterly inexcusable, and clearly condemn both the atheist and the idolater. With the atheist, or him who disbelieves or denies the existence of a God, and who regards the whole visible frame of things as the result of chance—with such a person, the subject here does not lead me to have any thing to do. The words of the text were not addressed to atheists, but to idolaters. But against them, too, these works testify; and we find this same Apostle making use of the argument at great length in the 1st chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, verses 19–23, 25, “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewn it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

* Day of thanksgiving for an abundant harvest.

and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God unto a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." Here the Apostle argues that the invisible things of God—viz., his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things which are made—i. e., by the works of Creation; so that they are without excuse, who either deny his being and perfections, or alienate from him the worship which is his due—giving his glory to another, even to the creature, and his praise to graven images. This, then, is the first witness I mention which God has preserved for himself among all nations, the works of Creation, which ever proclaim his being and perfections, and declare his glory. And inasmuch as they witness for God, they witness against the ungodly. This, however, is not the kind of witness expressed in the text.

II. But there is another kind of witness which God has preserved for himself among all nations, although in times past he suffered them to walk in their own ways. The last mentioned is an external, what I am now to name is an internal witness. It is a witness for God in the breast of man, and on this account has been sometimes termed his vicegerent there—I mean conscience. It is a witness often both alluded to and appealed to. To this the Apostle refers in the 2d chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, (verses 14, 15), as a witness among the Gentiles, and assigns to it an important, high, and honourable office—that of approving or disapproving, commending or condemning, according as they acted agreeably, or contrary, to the light of nature or natural reason which was in them. It is an universal and perpetual witness for God. And as the last mentioned witness is co-extensive with Creation, so this is co-extensive with the human race. While it is supreme among the heathen, it is not superseded by the refinement of enlightened lands. It is common to Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free. It is that candle of the Lord in man which has never been put out. It burns within him, while the lamp of the gospel burns without and around him. This, however, is not the witness expressed in the text.

III. But there is another witness still which God reserved for himself among all nations, even while he suffered them to walk in their own ways, and that is, the witness of Providence in the exercise of common bounty. This now is the witness which the Apostle alludes to in the text, "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness in that he *did good.*"

To the same effect the Psalmist speaks in several places, thus, "The Lord is good unto all"—i. e., to all his creatures; and again, "Thou art good, and doest good." Yes, God is indeed good—good in himself—good in his essence—good in the highest degree; and every manifestation of his character is that of goodness. When Moses prayed thus, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory;" God said in answer to him, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee,"—evidently shewing that his glory was his *goodness*. Goodness, indeed, seems necessary to the very idea of a God. We can have no notion of a malevolent God—such a Being would be a self-tormentor, and could not exist. And as goodness is essential in the notion of a God, so *diffusiveness* is essential to the notion of goodness. As being *good* is necessary to being God, so *doing* good is necessary to *being* good;* for goodness is an active principle—diffusive in its nature, and varied in its expressions according to the character and number of the objects towards whom it is exercised. It is his *providential* goodness that now claims our notice, as expressed in the text. And his goodness in providence is co-extensive with his government in providence. He "is good to all"—he is bountiful and long suffering to all men—He is kind to the evil and unthankful—he did good to the nations even while they were estranging themselves from him, and walking in their own ways. Indeed, so prominent and palpable a display is this of the Divine character in the government of Providence, that when our Saviour himself would urge men to the practice of kindness and forbearance to their fellow creatures, irrespective of their character and desert, he enforces his admonitions by the example of our heavenly Father, who, says he, "maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." Striking coincidence between the language of our Lord, as now quoted, and the words of the Apostle in the text, the result of the same Holy Spirit of inspiration! What our Saviour assumes as a universal and universally known attribute of Divine Providence, with a view to enforce upon men, from the example of God, the practice of kindness and forbearance to their fellow-creatures, how undeserving soever they might be, the Apostles adduce to the idolatrous inhabitants of Lycaonia, in proof, not only of the existence of the one living and true God, but also of the benevolence of his character, and the consequent benignity of his government; for, as manifest operation proves the existence of a living Agent, so beneficial agency as clearly proves the benevolent character of that Agent. And as the proved existence of one Supreme Being, the

* Bridges.

Creator and Lord of all, claims for him the undivided homage and submission of all his creatures, so the demonstrated benignity of his government claims their love and gratitude, and a spirit of constant dependance, devotion, and thankfulness. And this is the line of reasoning which the Apostles adopt in the text when speaking to idolaters, and preaching that they should turn from their vanities to the living God. "Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good." He did good, and does good continually. He did good to all nations even while they were doing evil in his sight, and walking in their own idolatrous ways. He did good in his Providence to them; and, therefore, they were inexcusable who, in the face of proofs of his existence and goodness, so numerous, so clear, and so cogent, and in despite, as it were, of showers of benefits which they continually received, alienated from him the homage, and worship, and glory, that were due unto his name. He did good to *them*; he does good to *us*; he does good to *all*; and not only so, but *all* the good which *all* receive is derived from him *alone*. "Every good gift," says the Apostle James, "and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights."

It is remarkable that the Apostles, in the passage before us, deduce their argument for their God, or rather represent him as drawing his witness for himself, from his goodness, and not from his greatness. This they do, not only because his goodness, as we mentioned at the outset, is his *glory*, but in opposition to the heathen, who drew their representations of the Supreme Being from such attributes as spoke terror and struck with awe. Accordingly, their Jupiter they called the Thunderer, and, in their descriptions, represented him as holding a thunderbolt in his hand. And, therefore, the living and the true God is represented in the text as deriving his witness for himself from the benignity of his dealings with men, and as holding in his possession the rain and fruitful seasons. The Apostles had a boundless field, indeed, before them, when they had the Providence of God to reason from for his existence and character, and might have spoken without end of instances of his goodness; for all the acts of his government are effluxes of his benevolence, or so many expressions of goodness, endlessly diversified. But they condescend upon one which was familiar to all, and which all experienced—which even *savages* could understand, because it was necessary to sustenance and continued existence—viz., the Providential supplies of meat and drink. "Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food," &c. And this particular instance of God's goodness comes in beautiful connection with the preceding context, where the gods of the heathen are called, as in

many other parts of Scripture, *vanities*—an appropriate name, surely, which signifies empty things, unable to supply the necessities of their deluded votaries—having no cisterns on high from which to shower down rain on a parched earth, or fruitful seasons on the famished inhabitants of the world. “Are there,” asks Jeremiah, “any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” By this, then, is the God of heaven distinguished from all idols—that He “does good, and gives rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

But not only do these words adduce a witness for God among the heathen, but they are fitted also to reprove those among ourselves who are apt to rest in second causes, without looking beyond them to the great First Cause of all—who look to the heavens, *i. e.*, to the skies, for rain and fruitful seasons, without recognising, as they ought, the Governor in the heavens, and the Dispenser of gifts from the heavens. In the passage already quoted from Jeremiah, it is asked, “Can the heavens give showers?” No, they cannot of themselves; and, therefore, in the very next clause of that same verse, the explanatory question is put—“Art thou not He, O Lord our God?” Many regard the falling of the rain as the mere operation of natural laws; and, doubtless, it is the result of natural causes, but who ever heard of the operation of laws without the continued sanction and authority of the lawgiver? or who witnesses the continued action of machinery without the continual presence and pleasure of the superintending and intelligent mind? And so, in the text, we have it, “Nevertheless He left not himself without witness in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven,” &c. It is not the heavens that give us rain, but God that gives us rain *from* heaven; and when, therefore, at any time the heavens are locked up, and the clouds sealed—when the former rains are withheld, and the latter rains denied—when the dews are kept back—when the heavens are as iron, so that the earth is as brass—when vegetation dies, and every green thing withers—when the crops are burned up—when the brute creation groans—when man’s hope faints, and his face looks pale—in short, when death, in the most hideous form of starvation, threatens—it is God that does it. He does it in sovereignty, but he also does it in wisdom and in love. He does it, who, we are told, “afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men;” and therefore he does it for a good cause. He does it because of a controversy with the inhabitants of the earth. He does it, who, as the Psalmist says, “turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.” Pa. cvii. 33, 34.

And when, again, in pity for a perishing world, this picture is reversed—when the face of the earth is renewed again—when its inhabitants have put off their sackcloth, and clothe themselves with the garments of joy—it is God that does it, and that most frequently in answer to the prayers of a humbled world. He does it in sovereign love, and from compassion for their forlorn condition. The Creator of the heavens and the earth and the sea—He “who measures the waters in the hollow of his hands”—unlocks again the treasures of the rain, and “sends the springs into the valleys which run among the hills.” It is He that gives, and He that takes away, let the congregations of his people say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Let us obey the wise man’s admonition, “In the day of prosperity let us be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider.” In the day of prosperity, by our reason of temporal abundance, let us be joyful in God the author of it, and give thanks at the remembrance of his goodness. In the day of our adversity by reason of scarcity, and of scarcity by reason of drought, let us consider the design of the dispensation, and the cause of the controversy. Let us humble ourselves, repent, return, cry unto the Lord, and be relieved—humbly joyful that “his hand is never shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear.”

A few words now upon the last clause of the text, “Filling our hearts with food and gladness.” This naturally results from the former. The rain and fruitful seasons produce fulness of food, and then fulness of food creates gladness. There can be no gladness in the heart, or joyfulness upon the countenance, of a famished creature. There was no gladness in the hearts of the Western Islanders of our land a few years ago, because there was no provision in their homes; but God saved their lives in dearth, and blessed them with a great deliverance.

And now, brethren, we are this day met professedly to give thanks to God—the God of seasons—for the rain and fruitful season which now fill our hearts with food and gladness. After some threatening indications in God’s Providence, behold now the year is crowned with his goodness! “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” Let me come to close quarters with my hearers. Are you now truly thankful? Let me speak to your experience. Are you not less impressed with the Lord’s bounty and goodness at the end of the season, than you were with a fear of scarcity in the course of it? You were not remiss, perhaps, in spring and summer, to deprecate his displeasure, and to implore his Providential favour. Are you as careful *now* to give him praise for that favour and bounty realised? Is there a person in this assembly, who, in the course of the season, on seeing “the pastures clothed with flocks, and

the valleys covered over with corn," came up to the house of God resolving to send up the voice of thanksgiving, in the assembly of worshippers, to the bountiful Father of all, and remembered, on going home, the unfulfilled intention? I am sure there is, at least, *one*. And does not this prove the charge I have brought against us all—that we are less impressed with God's goodness, and less concerned for his glory, than we are impressed with our own temporal wants, and engrossed with our own selfish interests? We may well compare ourselves to the lepers of old, of whom only one of the ten returned to give God glory for the miracle of cleansing. The other nine equally received the benefit of Christ's healing, but one only was found thankful. And so we all in this congregation have been alike blessed with God's gracious interposition in this season, and partaken of the bounty of the late harvest! God knows whether the same proportion of us, small as that proportion was—one out of ten—have this day returned to the house of God to give him the glory.

O may we now, impressed with the baseness of our past forgetfulness of God and his goodness, exclaim with one who was found in a similar situation with respect to his best friend, who had comforted him in a dungeon, "This day do I remember my faults!" So may each of us say in reference to God, our bountiful Benefactor and best Friend, "I do remember my faults this day." I remember my forgetfulness of God, my ingratitude towards him, my base requital of all his mercies!

And now, brethren, in conclusion, suffer me, on this day of thanksgiving for the gifts of Providence, and the favour of a bountiful harvest, to call upon you to express your thankfulness to God for his best, his unspeakable gift, the Lord Jesus Christ. The other gifts which we are called this day publicly to acknowledge, are gifts of his *left* hand; this is the gift of his *right* hand, and of his covenant. The other gifts may raise your *circumstances*—this gift can enrich your *souls*. The other gifts terminate in time—this gift will aggrandise you in eternity. Those only enjoy the full benefit of God's *temporal* mercies, enjoying his blessing with them, who embrace the mercy promised to the fathers. See then, that you embrace him in all his fulness—that you appropriate him in all his suitableness. Thus only can you prove your thankfulness. *They* only are truly thankful for the gifts of God's Providence, who thankfully embrace the gift of his Son. How can *they* be unfeignedly thankful for the *less*, who are utterly unthankful for the *greater*?

May the Spirit of the Lord carry home to you these closing remarks! May the Lord accept this day's thanksgiving, and bless this day's services, and to his name be the glory!

SERMON LVIII.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL, AND THE FELLOW
OF GOD ; AND THE SUFFERINGS INFLICTED UPON HIM.

BY THE REV. ROBERT ELDER, A.M., EDINBURGH.

* Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the
Lord of hosts."—*ZECH. xiii. 7.*

(Preached in St Paul's Free Church, Edinburgh, on a Communion Sabbath.)

WE read in Scripture of promises exceeding great and precious which are freely given to the children of God. They are secured to them in the Covenant of Grace—are yea and amen in Christ, the living Head of the redeemed—are their portion and property in this world, and the pledges of a glorious inheritance in heaven.

There is one of these precious promises which on a Sabbath of solemn communion should be especially present to our minds. It is that which is given by the mouth of Isaiah, " Mine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." (*Isa. xxxii. 17.*) The disciples of the Lord experienced the fulfilment of this promise, when, beholding Jesus with the eye of faith, one of them could say, speaking in the name of all (*John i. 14*), " The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Nathanael was enabled through grace to realize it, when he said (*John i. 49*), " Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of Israel."

Brethren, have we come here this day desiring and praying to partake in the like experience? Has our prayer been that the king himself may sit at his table, that he may bring even us, unworthy and unprofitable, into his chambers, that we may behold his glory, may be gladdened with the light of his countenance, and may partake in the fulness of his grace? If not, why are we coming to this ordinance? This is no place for the merely secular and carnal. But if it has, then let us seek, with a view to the attainment of these objects, that this precious portion of the truth which I have chosen as my text, may, by the teaching of the Spirit, be made clear to our understandings, and be deeply and savingly engraven on our hearts.

That it contains a clear and remarkable revelation of the Saviour, no one of spiritual discernment can hesitate to believe. It is one of the clearest of those prophetic testimonies which declared to the Church

beforehand, "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." It is deeply interesting to consider it in the full and glorious light of the gospel, with which we in these latter days are so richly favoured. The Lord enable us, then, before we proceed to his table, to turn aside and behold this great sight. And oh! that the faith of his children may be in lively exercise, that they may truly "see the King in his beauty!" Oh that his enemies may be humbled in the dust, and even now be plucked as brands from the fire!

Let us consider, *first*, The description here given of the Saviour, by the names or titles which are applied to him; and, *secondly*, The view presented in the text of God's dealings towards him.

I. Consider the description here given of the Saviour, by the names or titles which are applied to him.

1. He is called "the *Shepherd*"—"my *Shepherd* saith the Lord of hosts."

This I need hardly inform you is one of the titles by which the Saviour is frequently spoken of in Scripture. Thus, for example, it was prophesied concerning him (Isa. xl. 11), "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those who are with young." He applies this title to himself, when he says (John x. 11), "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." And to quote only one other passage out of many, we find an inspired apostle thus praying for those to whom he wrote (Heb. xiii. 20), "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in every good work to do his will," &c.

But the question is, what is the precise view of the Saviour's place and character, which the expression before us was intended to convey? The right understanding of this is absolutely necessary to an intelligent and profitable consideration of the grand truth presented in the text. You will see in the passages already quoted, that reference is made to the *flock* and the *sheep* of Christ, and especially in the last, where he is designated "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The expression significantly points us to his Mediatorial character and work. It reminds us that a people have been committed into his hands—that he has graciously undertaken on their behalf—and that, in the whole matter of their salvation, he is their head, their representative, and surety. It is of supreme importance to remember this, in considering the language of the text, for whatever is affirmed concerning him, is affirmed in this view of his character and work. It is not in an individual capacity that

he is here presented to our notice, but in his public and glorious character as "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," as standing in a relation vitally important to the people given him of the Father.

I may further observe, that the ideas suggested by this title as to the benefits derived by his people from the exercise of his Mediatorial offices, are full of interest and comfort to the children of God. As their "Shepherd," he knows them, whatever be their circumstances; and no event which affects them can occur without his notice. (John x. 14.) "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." He seeks and finds them, saves them from danger, leads them in the way of righteousness, and preserves them even to the end. (Exek. xxxiv. 12.) "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." (John x. 3.) "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out;" (verse xxviii.) "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Further, he "*feeds* his flock like a shepherd," imparting to them the Holy Spirit, causing his word to dwell in them richly, supplying all their need in this the house of their pilgrimage, and sustaining their souls with nourishment Divine. "The Lord is my Shepherd," may every humble believer say, "I shall not want: he maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."

Nor are the benefits flowing from this gracious character of the Redeemer confined to this transitory world. In heaven he is still represented as "the Shepherd of Israel." "The Lamb," it is said, (Rev. vii. 17), "which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

But before I pass from this part of the subject, let me beg of you to observe, that it is Jehovah who speaks in this text, and that he calls this gracious Redeemer, "My Shepherd." And why is he thus designated? Why, brethren, because he was appointed and commissioned by the Father, in the counsels of eternity, to execute this office of "The great Shepherd of the sheep." (Ps. lxxxix. 19), "Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." It tells us also of the infinite delight and complacency with which the Father regards him as standing in this relation to the perishing objects of his sovereign electing love. (Prov. viii. 30), "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights

were with the sons of men." And it reminds us how God, in his infinite mercy, is inviting us freely in the gospel, to come and commit the keeping of our souls to this good and gracious "Shepherd of the sheep." This, says he, is *my* way of salvation, "behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." "Incline your ear and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

These views, brethren, are full of comfort and instruction. But the text goes on to speak more particularly of the wonderful constitution of the Mediator's person. I observe, therefore,

2. That he is also called "the *Man*." Let me just say here in a word, that there can be no right understanding of the gospel where the glory and excellence of the Redeemer's person are not truly perceived and appreciated, where he is not seen in himself to be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Now observe, this great Shepherd of the sheep is here represented as "*the man*."

Sometimes it happens, brethren, that in our anxiety to avoid some fatal error, we are in danger of overlooking or undervaluing some precious portion of the truth. So is it often, I believe, with regard to this precious doctrine of God's word. Believers, in their zealous regard for the glory and honour of the Divine Redeemer, sometimes lose the comfort to be derived from a believing contemplation of "the *man* Christ Jesus." Turn your thoughts, then, for a little to this subject. How often is the Saviour thus spoken of in Scripture? Thus it is written (Isa. xxxii. 2), "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Thus also says the gracious Redeemer himself (Luke xix. 10), "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And the Apostle tells us (Phil. ii. 7), He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Shall we dare to mince a doctrine which is so plainly revealed in the oracles of God? or fear to avow it in all its simplicity, because some, alas, pervert it to their own destruction? Oh, no! The Lord give us to glory and rejoice in it as the grand and precious truth, which opens a door of hope for perishing sinners of mankind! Just observe the place which is given it in the word of inspiration, how essential this doctrine of the Saviour's humanity is to the idea of his fitness for the work assigned him by the Father. (Heb. ii. 14, 17), "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he

might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Dear friends, this doctrine, so much perverted by blinded and deluded men, is precious and comforting to the children of God. He on whom the help of sinners has been laid, was "chosen from among the people;" he is our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, though free from the taint of sin. Wherefore (Heb. ii. 11), "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Draw near, he seems to say in this character to the humbled, penitent, broken-hearted sinner (Job. xxxiii. 6, 7), "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee." You see, too, that the righteousness which he wrought out as the Surety and Mediator of his people, was wrought out in the nature of man—it is a righteousness suited, so to speak, to the mould and circumstances of men—it is fitted to be a royal robe for you, that, being accepted in the Beloved, you may enter for his sake into the very palace of the king. And, oh, what encouragement is there in this truth to cast all our care—to roll every burden over upon him, for surely he knows our frame and remembers that we are dust. He can sympathize with us in every difficulty and trial. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.) And then, to think that in this very nature of man he now dwells and reigns in heaven, the pattern and forerunner of his ransomed followers—Oh, how animating the hope! That land of light and glory is then a fitting habitation even for man who is a worm—for the son of man who is but a worm. Why may not you and I, dear friends, be there with Jesus—"The Man Christ Jesus," our brother, the friend and Saviour of sinners? Oh for grace to flee and cling to this glorious hope, to hold it as the anchor of our soul! Can he not bring us there, giving us the title and the fitness—can he not change even these vile bodies (Phil. iii. 21), "that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself?"

But now observe what follows, for

3. He is further called the "*Fellow of Jehovah*"—"the man that is my *Fellow*, saith the Lord of hosts." Thus, you will observe, the wondrous truth is presented to our view, that he who is the Shepherd of the sheep—the man Christ Jesus—is at the same time the *equal* or *Fellow* of Jehovah—*very God* as well as *very man*. Yes, brethren, the wondrous truth I call it, for so it is written in the Scripture (1 Tim. iii. 16), "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was

manifest in the flesh." This is the crowning truth in the doctrine of salvation. Without it, there can be no sure foundation, no well grounded hope for the guilty and helpless children of men. Take this truth away, and you remove, so to speak, the keystone of the arch—the goodly fabric crumbles into ruins. You find, therefore, that this doctrine, like a golden thread, runs through all the declarations of God's word on the subject of our great and everlasting hope. Thus, for example, it is said by the Prophet (Isa. ix. 6), "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, *the Mighty God*, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The Saviour himself declares this doctrine when he says (John x. 30), "I and my Father are one;" (xiv. 11), "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very work's sake." An Apostle also speaks of him (Phil. ii. 6) as "being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God," as himself "God over all, blessed for ever."

Oh brethren, how rich and precious the comfort which this truth is fitted to impart! Behold and consider, is there any thing too hard for this glorious Divine Redeemer to accomplish? Have you faith to dwell on this view, and to cherish it in your hearts? And can you then doubt of the efficacy of that righteousness which he wrought—of the reality and value of his merit to purchase, even for the vilest, the favour of an infinitely holy God? Can the arm of this "great Shepherd" fail in protecting and preserving his sheep even to the end? Is it too much for him to raise them from the dust to the full enjoyment of glory, honour, and immortality? No, no; "For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the Head of the body the Church." Col. i. 16. And, therefore, in the midst of difficulties the most trying, and dangers the most alarming, faith, grasping this glorious truth, feeling that the eternal God himself is the refuge and stay of the poor, tempted, despised believer, may say (2 Tim. i. 12), "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

These views of the Redeemer, brethren, are rich with Gospel truth—comforting and nourishing to the renewed and believing soul. If we have been taught of God—if the power of spiritual discernment has been given us—in these views we may truly "see the King in his beauty," and may rejoice in his perfect fulness. Angels desire to look into this glorious subject. Lightly as the children of this world may think

of it, eternity will be filled with the admiring contemplation of its excellence.

But I now proceed to observe that there is one special view of the dealings of Jehovah towards this "great Shepherd of the sheep," in the light of which these truths which I have enumerated shine forth with peculiar excellence. It is this view which the text presents to us. And now, therefore, consider

II. The view of God's dealings presented in the text, "Awake, O sword," &c.

Now, brethren, what is the view which is here presented? The Shepherd of the Lord's flock is here revealed as suffering, as wounded, pierced, bleeding, dying under the infliction of the sword of avenging justice. It speaks not merely of his sufferings at the hands of men—of the hatred, reproach, and calumny of the wicked—when, as we read, Ps. cxxix. 3, "The plowers plowed upon his back, and made long their furrows"—of the sword of cruel persecution which was unsheathed against him, and which continued to pursue him even to the cross. Nor does it merely speak of the rage and malice of the powers of darkness—of the fiery darts of the enemy which were hurled incessantly against him, till, in the end, he could say, in calm anticipation of the last and most fearful onset, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." All these sufferings were doubtless ordained and permitted by the Father, and the great Redeemer would unquestionably feel that the assaults of the enemies who compassed him about were as the sword of the Lord piercing even to his bones. But our thoughts are directed here to the immediate infliction of the Father's wrath. Thus, it is said by the mouth of another of God's holy Prophets (Isa. liii. 10), "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." It is to this that our minds are directed in the text. The expression points to those dealings under which the holy Jesus in agony exclaimed (Mat. xxvi. 38), "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" verse 42, "Oh my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done;" xxvii. 46, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You will observe that the will and authority of the Father are clearly introduced as not only sanctioning but expressly ordering the infliction. It is as if the sword were slumbering in its sheath—as if it possessed no warrant to smite this holy and exalted one, till the command of the righteous and almighty Lawgiver was issued—"Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd." Thus it is written, "God spared not his own Son"—he pierced him even to the soul, till the sword of infinite justice was satisfied with blood. O brethren, who can tell of the depth

and intensity of that suffering? (Jer. xlvii. 6), "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?" An endless eternity of woe, that is the portion of the creature who, sinning against God, and despising offered mercy, has this sword of avenging justice plunged into his vitals. And all this, compressed, as it were, into an hour of unspeakable, intense, and awful agony, did the holy soul of Jesus willingly endure, till, in triumph, he could say, "It is finished!"

But how and why, let us ask, these dealings of Jehovah towards him? This was no common spectacle under the moral government of God, who is "holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works." At first sight the sun was darkened, the earth trembled, the rocks were rent, the graves were opened, their long silent inhabitants arose and shook off the garments of the tomb. Yet poor, blinded, perishing men, busied with the trifles of this passing world, have no leisure, no anxiety to consider it. The Lord put it into our hearts, brethren, to turn aside and to behold this great sight! *How and whence* this command to the sword of avenging justice so truly, so awfully fulfilled? The explanation is before us in the title here given to the Saviour—"Awake, O sword, against my *Shepherd*"—"the great Shepherd of the sheep." In this character he endured as the *Shepherd*, the Mediator, the Surety of his people; and so that saying was fulfilled (John x. 11), "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Yes, the objects of redeeming love were guilty and condemned! Infinite justice demanded their eternal punishment. God had threatened it, and He "is not a man that He should lie." Here, then, is the wonder of Divine grace. The great and good Shepherd of the sheep took upon himself their guilt and condemnation. The Father gave and appointed him as a sacrifice, in his infinite love and pity towards the objects of electing grace, that the door of mercy might be opened, and his own righteousness declared in the remission of sins. So it is written (Isa. liii. 6), "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Hence the awaking of the sword against him—hence those sufferings and that agony which he endured. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him." O blessed truth, the only refuge of the guilty! Well may we exclaim, who is like unto thee, O God, "a just God and a Saviour?" To know and believe this glorious truth is life eternal, for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

But further, mark what a flood of light the view given in the text of the Redeemer's person casts on this subject. It was against "*the man*."

Christ Jesus, that the sword of Justice awoke. By his *humanity* he was fitted to endure—he was capable of suffering. Thus, also, offended justice was vindicated in the same nature which had sinned. Thus, God's holy law was magnified in and by man—"the Son of Man;" and thus was provision made for the fulfilment of that gracious word, "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest."

But, remember, that in union with the human nature we have presented, in the same person, "the fellow of the Lord of Hosts." Thus there was *infinite* merit in the sacrifice and obedience which are here spoken of. Thus accordingly the curse of a broken law was thoroughly exhausted. Glory in the highest was given to Jehovah—a perfect righteousness was brought in, and the gift of the Holy Ghost was secured for the objects of his love. Observe, too, that in virtue of his Divinity he was enabled to endure even to the uttermost, he was proclaimed a conqueror in the end, and he divided the spoil with the strong. That sword of infinite justice which never could be satisfied merely with the sufferings of a guilty creature; but which behoved to extend these sufferings through eternity, was fully satisfied in him, and returned in peace to its scabbard. Thus, then, blessed be his name, there is perfect freedom from wrath and destruction through the sufferings and death of the Divine Redeemer. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There is, also, by reason of the infinite merits of those sufferings, a life new and glorious to be enjoyed in him. Pardon, peace, holiness, the indwelling of the Spirit of all grace, with his comforting, renewing, and strengthening influences, and a heavenly inheritance of glory—these are the fruits of Immanuel's death. "I will ransom them," says he, (Hosea xiii. 14) "from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction."

Let me now briefly say, in concluding this discourse,

1. Every word in the text is comforting and instructive to the sheep of Christ. Poor sinners, who have come at Christ's gracious word, and have put your case into his hands, in the exercise of living faith, behold, for your comfort and instruction, the spectacle which is here presented! Oh! what wondrous love was this which prompted Jehovah to choose his beloved Son as your Surety, and which prompted Jesus to drink for your sakes the cup of his Father's wrath. Again, what a peace must that be which is laid up in Christ for believers, the fruit of infinite satisfaction rendered to infinite justice—a peace we may well say which "passeth understanding." Once more, what wisdom, power, and grace are displayed in the *person* of our glorious Redeemer, and especially when we view it in connection with his work. Oh! what springs of

endless comfort are in all these views. Cast your burden, dear friends, on Jesus. "Trust in him at *all times*." "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king." "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

Think, also, what a lesson is here given you as to the awful demerit and heinousness of sin. It was for this that the sword awoke against this great Shepherd of the sheep, when "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Will you not, then, fight against sin, resisting if need be "even unto blood?" Oh! dear friends, pray for grace to do so, that this abominable thing may no more have dominion over you, but that ye may follow Jesus fully and faithfully, till at last ye dwell with him in his Father's house.

2. There is precious light in this subject for awakened and trembling sinners. Poor souls, who are feeling what it is to "bear the indignation of the Lord," because you have sinned against him—who are reading in every page of Scripture the sentence of your own condemnation, behold here the secret of your peace, "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.) God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) These are the truths which are here presented. These, dear friends, are "the words of eternal life." Cast yourselves freely on this once-suffering and now glorified Shepherd. Lie down at his feet, confessing your sins, covering your heads with shame and sorrow. Tell him that you are undone, that you have brought destruction on yourselves, that you have not one word to answer. Wait thus for his salvation, saying in your hearts—"Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." Be assured you will find him "a hiding-place from the storm." He who is our life, our peace, our all in all, has testified (blessed be his name) "him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out."

3. There is here a lesson of solemn warning to careless sinners, who have never yet fled for refuge to the only hope set before us. See here, I say to such, the terrors of avenging justice! Behold the wonders of redeeming love! Behold, also, the glory of that Saviour who came to rescue such as you from the pit of destruction! No new subjects these. They have often before been pressed on your attention. But ye have no will, no heart to deal with them as solemn realities. The truth is, ye are not seeking to live in habitual expectation of judgment and eternity. Trifles which perish with the using have hitherto been every thing to you; the cares and enjoyments of a poor passing world. Oh! shall it be thus with you still, poor blinded sinners? Will you again brave these terrors of the Lord—will you despise this love—will you

trample on this gracious and Divine Redeemer. Look, I beseech you, at the spectacle which is here presented, and consider in this day of your visitation, how fearful a thing it is "to fall into the hands of the living God." Oh! consider also what Divine love has done, and what it still can do, even in your experience, guilty and miserable as you are. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Amen.

SERMON LIX.

THE NATURE OF PRAYER, THE ANSWER OF PRAYER, AND THE
ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER.

BY THE REV. W. M. HETHERINGTON, LL.D., ST ANDREWS.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—*PHIL. iv. 6-7.*

In the simplest view that can be taken of this passage, there are two great and important subjects brought before us, namely, *prayer*, and *the answer to prayer*: but there is also another of a less direct and somewhat complex nature, which demands our attention, and which may fittingly conclude our view, leading us to contemplate *the proper state of mind in, and the encouragement to, prayer*. This will enable us to divide the subject into three distinct heads.

I. The true nature of prayer.

II. The true answer to prayer.

III. The proper state of mind in, and encouragement to, prayer.

I. *The true nature of prayer.*

Were we to suppose the question asked, in plain and honest sincerity, "What is prayer?" and were the person by whom the question had been asked one who was ignorant of all revealed religion, it would be the duty of the instructor to direct his mind to the necessary relation in which every intelligent creature stands to God. For the simplest idea of prayer that can be formed would represent it as the approach of an intelligent creature into the presence of its Creator, for the purpose of making known its wants and requests, expressing its desires and hopes, and looking up humbly and adoringly to Him, in the full confidence of obtaining every needful supply—regarding Him as both able and willing to grant all and more than all that we can ask or think. Viewed in this its primary aspect, prayer is an act of homage necessarily due from every rational creature to the Eternal God, and so far prayer might be the dictate of even natural religion. So far as this view reaches, and is sincerely entertained, it tends to give us right conceptions of ourselves and of our God—of our weakness and necessities, and of his all-sufficient grace. In this respect, therefore, prayer must, in its own nature, be well-pleasing to God. So far, also, this view is the same as that sug-

gested by the language of the Psalmist—"O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come!"—in which text is conveyed to us the idea of the infinite Sovereign of the universe, seated on the throne of grace, listening to the prayers of his intelligent creatures, more ready to hear than they are to ask, nay, inviting them to ask that they may receive—supplying all their wants, granting all their petitions, except such as would be injurious, and even giving to them the spirit of grace and supplication, that they may ask for things agreeable to his will, and therefore never ask in vain.

Surely this view alone, were it rightly understood, might suffice to meet and repel some of the objections occasionally used against prayer; for this view constrains us to perceive prayer to be essentially an act of homage rendered by a dependent and intelligent creature to his Divine Creator, which it must at all times and in all circumstances be his duty to render, by the very fact and law of his existence. Thus viewed, it is not only the duty of wicked men to pray, but it is even the duty of Satan himself to pray, and will be the duty of that dark and rebellious spirit, and all his deluded victims, throughout eternity, though it is one that they can never discharge. Nor does this contradict the language of Scripture, but rather furnish an explanation of its true meaning, as may be easily shown. The Psalmist says, in a passage applied to Judas, "Let his prayer become sin," or, "His prayer shall become sin." It would be a violent misapplication of Scripture to draw a general conclusion from a case which never had, and never can have, any parallel. Such other texts as the following require a different answer—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"—"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord"—"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Nothing can be more evident than that these passages refer to iniquitous desires, to polluted sacrifices, to wilful rejection of the law, or apostacy, and, therefore, to the utterance of wicked or malevolent prayers, such as the Lord cannot hear and answer without pre-supposing him to have pleasure in iniquity or malevolence—a supposition which would be nothing less than blasphemy. But are applications of such a nature entitled to be called prayers, in the right sense of that sacred word? There may be the bended knee, the clasped hands, the upraised look, the loud and earnest cry, in what are not prayers, but *imprecations*. Men of such minds do not *pray*, they blaspheme God, and invoke curses on themselves and on their fellow-men; and can this be anything else but abomination to the Lord? But not one of these texts has, or by any possibility can have, the least reference to the cry of a contrite sinner for mercy, or the primary duty of a creature to render homage to his Creator.

The cry of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," was not rejected because he *was* a sinner. The prayers of Cornelius were heard and answered while he was unacquainted with the Gospel. Simon the Magian was exhorted by the inspired Apostle to pray, while he was still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. The prayers of Nineveh were heard, and judgment delayed, though they were not worshippers of the true God. The fasting, humiliation, and prayers of even Ahab were heard, and the destruction of his house and kingdom postponed for a season, though he continued to adhere to the idolatrous worship of Baal even to the hour of his death. But we need not prosecute this topic in further refutation of an objection which is equally contrary to nature, reason, and scripture.

Hitherto we have viewed prayer as even natural religion might view it—as an act of homage from the creature to the Creator. But *revelation* opens up its full nature and importance. Revelation shows man not merely as a creature, but as sinful and depraved—in a state of rebellion against God, and incapable of recovering his favour—and therefore not in a condition to appear before God acceptably in his own natural state, which is a state of sinfulness and enmity, but needing a Mediator through whom to approach God, and by whose intercession alone he can be accepted.

And that this forlorn and miserable state may not deter man from drawing near to God to offer up his due homage, it not only tells him that he needs a Mediator, but it reveals to him that Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Advocate with the Father; who, in the exercise of his sacred office, not only makes intercession on our behalf, pleading his own perfect righteousness and finished work, but sends down the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of grace and supplication, to teach us to pray. This, it will be observed, is not in the slightest degree incompatible with the view which regards prayer as the primary act of homage due from man to his Creator; but rather the application of that view to the altered circumstances of fallen and sinful man. For it is still his duty to pray; but as a fallen creature it is his duty to present those prayers through the Mediator, through whom alone he can now have access to God. And when further directed to contemplate and understand what Scripture teaches concerning the Mediator, as having taken upon himself our nature, and in that nature both offered up an atonement for sin, and set before us a perfect example, we receive a perfect conception of the true nature of prayer. If now the question were asked, "What is prayer?"—we can answer, "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." This

is prayer, true prayer; not only the due homage of a creature, but the humble and grateful adoration of a Christian.

The full view thus obtained, if rightly understood and used, completely answers and sets aside another class of objections, sometimes urged against prayer. Men of what is termed a philosophical turn of mind, will sometimes very gravely ask the following question, "How can it be imagined that the prayers of feeble man, a very worm of the earth, can change the purposes of the Eternal and Unchangeable Jehovah, which must all partake of his own eternal and unchangeable character, and therefore be from everlasting to everlasting the same?" But who pretends, or presumes even to insinuate, that the prayers of man *do* change the eternal purposes of God. Not the humble Christian, whose language and spirit in prayer to God, after the example of the Mediator himself, is, *THY WILL BE DONE*. Not the Christian philosopher, who knows that such a notion is equally impious and absurd. But the philosophical objector may be met on his own ground, and when he asks, "how it can be imagined that the prayers of man can change the purposes of God?" he may be told that there is a previous question to which he would do well to direct his attention. How does he know but that the very prayer offered up for some specific object may have been connected in the Divine mind from all eternity with that object, so that the prayer formed what may be termed the last connecting link in the infinite chain of causation, although the only one within the cognisance of the human being, both because the only one in which he could directly participate, and also as the one which, while it formed his due act of homage and allegiance, conferred upon him the conscious perception of that high intercourse subsisting between earth and heaven, between time and eternity, between man and God? Certainly, throughout the whole range of material nature, we nowhere behold effects produced without the employment of adequate causes, and in a train of regular sequences. It would be considered sheer insanity in any man to expect the *end* without the previous use of the right *means*. May it not be conceived that a similar law prevails in the world of mind, among unseen and spiritual existences, though we cannot there so clearly trace its operations? The prayer, therefore, may be, though not the efficient cause, yet the necessary preceding and connecting link in the sequence of spiritual things, fore-ordained and fore-arranged in the eternal counsels of God. It would be no adequate objection to reply, that we cannot understand why prayer should be such a necessary and connecting link. The very same objection might with equal propriety be urged against the use of means in material nature; for we cannot detect in any one instance, what it is in the essential nature of any thing which

enables it to operate in a peculiar manner upon any other, producing invariably similar results under similar circumstances; this only we know, that God has given to material existences certain qualities, the effect of which is, that by a peculiar use of them peculiar results shall follow. And it will not be easy for the philosophical objector to prove that a similar law does not regulate the spiritual world, and that it may be the essential quality of prayer, spiritually considered, to form necessarily the last connecting link in the chain of invisible agency—the viewless medium of intercourse between humble, dependant, and supplicating man, and the free bounty of the all-gracious and all-providing Jehovah. If prayer be thus viewed, the objection before us disappears; for if prayer be the last link in the chain of infinite decrees, connecting the object prayed for with God's purpose to grant it, then prayer does not *change* but *complete* God's decree.

But when turning from this comparatively philosophical view of the subject, lofty and encouraging as it is, and sufficient at least to neutralise all philosophical objections, the Christian looks more closely into the word of God, he obtains a more accurate and complete conception of the true nature of prayer. He there finds it invariably represented as a step necessary to be taken by man for the purpose of averting judgments, or procuring blessings; and he sees it followed by such consequences in the history and experience of the various holy men of old, whose experience and example have been recorded for our instruction. Since, therefore, God has both directly enjoined the use of prayer, and given many instances of its being followed by his blessing, no possible objections, however plausible, can in the least counterbalance these sovereign injunctions and gracious encouragements. In this manner, the authority of God is brought to refute the casuistry of man, and the mists of human prejudice and presumption are scattered by the strong beams of uncreated and eternal light. In the strength of this idea, a true Christian snaps asunder the bonds of that sophistical argument, “that the prayers of men cannot change the purposes of God,” as easily as Samson did the cords of the Philistines; for prayer being an ordinance of God, its answer, instead of being a change, is but the fulfilment of God's eternal counsel. Still farther, when a Christian is enabled to apprehend the precious truth, that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, and that when “we know not what we should pray for as we ought, the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;” when he has apprehended, felt, realised this precious truth, how unspeakably sublime must he perceive to be the character thus imparted to prayer! It is the anticipatory will of God, revealing in the mind of man its own fulfilment. It is a portion of the

infinite mind of the Spirit working in the soul of man to will and to ask what it was the eternal purpose of the Almighty God to grant ! The humblest Christian on his knees, giving utterance to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within him, is at that very moment forming the last link which unites the Infinite First Cause with that particular effect for which the believer prays ; and thus his prayer is a portion of its own answer, and his whole being expands with the glorious consciousness of holding communion with the Divine, all-ruling Intelligence, and becoming the final agent in accomplishing the gracious will of the Eternal Jehovah. Can all the created universe beside display a spectacle equal in dignity to the Christian's hour of prayer ? *That prayer* was regarded by the Omniscient mind of the Father from all eternity ; *that prayer* was included among the objects, to purchase which the Son of God assumed human nature and suffered on the cross, and which he now sits on the right hand of Divine majesty and power to present ; *that prayer* the Holy Spirit entered into the soul of the believer to inspire, so that heaven and earth, eternity and time, God and man, might meet together, be reconciled and be united for ever ; and thus every believing prayer is an earnest of the Spirit, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption, when to the whole adoring universe shall be made apparent, by the salvation of man, the rich grace, the infinite wisdom, the eternal love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such we believe to be the true nature of prayer ; let us now direct our attention to the second idea brought before us in this passage.

II. *The true answer to prayer.*

The direct statement of the text is, " And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It will be at once observed, that the Apostle does not say, that the very object for which we pray will be granted ; but he suggests an immeasurably more important and lofty line of thought. Let us explore it. What are we, in regard of knowledge, forethought, wisdom ? Have we any thing within us which can deserve to bear these names ? We must humbly confess that the very reverse is our condition. And when we reflect on our own ignorance, folly, and short-sightedness, we may well shrink from even wishing that our prayers should be always granted expressly according to what we ask. Who has not often longed and prayed with exceeding earnestness that some impending affliction might be averted, or some expected advantage realized ; and yet, after a short period, has had ample reason to rejoice that his prayer was not answered according to his request ! Many have been constrained to say with the Psalmist, " It hath been good for me that I was afflicted ;" and

perhaps not fewer have had reason to think, that in obtaining the object of their intense desire, they had drawn down upon themselves a judgment rather than procured a blessing. The direct and certain receiving of the very thing for which we pray would not, therefore, be the true answer to prayer. But we have been already led to perceive, that the proper spirit of true prayer cannot require such an answer; for the proper spirit of true prayer is expressed with Divine accuracy in these sacred words, "*Thy will be done.*" This, and this alone, is genuine homage, full allegiance, true Christian prayer. And as in this there cannot be an unsubmitive and pertinacious urging of our own desires, irrespective of the will of God; so it is impossible that a prayer conceived in such a spirit, can fail to obtain a suitable and even a completely satisfactory answer.

For, let it further be observed, that the very essence of the *fall* is *rebellion*; and the very essence of *sin* is "*enmity against God.*" In this condition it is impossible from the heart to say, "*Thy will be done.*" So long as we are in a state of rebellious enmity against God, we can have no peace with him—none with our own conscience, which is continually breathing forth its accusations against us—none with God's universe itself, which, obeying his laws, is banded against all rebels to his government. Never, indeed, can a fallen and rebellious sinner know what true peace is, till he knows what it is to be reconciled to God through the mediation of the Prince of Peace. Even after conversion, we are prone to relapse; and every such relapse is directly injurious to our peace. After recent sin, and even until we have obtained fresh access to the fountain which washes away all sin, we cannot read the Word of God without encountering much to startle and alarm us—we cannot attend public worship without dreading to encounter some expression of his displeasure—we cannot go to him in private prayer with the same filial love and confidence as formerly. In this state, should affliction overtake us, we are liable to repine, and fret, and strive with our Maker. But he smites us not in anger but in mercy—he visits us with chastisements—he humbles us, till with deep abhorrence of our recent guilt, with entire conviction of his justice, and in the spirit of the deepest and most submissive homage to his sovereign authority, the broken and contrite heart exclaims, "*Thy will be done*"—"Good is the will of the Lord."

When this is accomplished, the object of the afflictive dispensation is so far answered, and its removal may be expected speedily to follow. When we cast ourselves at our heavenly Father's feet, and kiss the rod, He will not continue to smite us. Yet the cessation of the chastisement was not the direct object of that prayer. What then was it? Oh! it was peace—peace with God. We had so far resumed our rebellion by

our recent backsliding and sin: perhaps we were not duly conscious of the full nature and extent of our relapse. The chastisement came, and we were brought to feel the amount of our criminality in the degree to which our peace was lost. The repining fretfulness is gone, and in the very utterance of the words, "Thy will be done," God's will is done, and our peace is restored. May not this be illustrated by an instance from domestic life. When a child has acted wrong, and given offence to his father, there must be chastisement, both for the child's own sake, that the offence may not be repeated, and for the sake of the peace and welfare of the entire family, which would be utterly ruined by unpunished and perpetuated rebellion. But the little culprit's heart is still too full of guilt and pride, and he will not yield. You must repeat the chastisement. Still he retains his sullen and stubborn obstinacy, and will not submit. What is now to be done? Your heart bleeds for your child, and your hand refuses to repeat the infliction. Yet let it be repeated. In wise mercy to him and to the whole family, we entreat you to persevere till he submit, else his respect for you, and your influence over him for good, are gone for ever. Enough! he yields! He runs not from you now, but to you—he clasps your knees—he looks up through tears—warm, gushing, submissive tears—he is willing to bear the chastisement, but cannot longer endure the displeasure—"Father, whip me if you please," he cries, "but O forgive and love me." Your faithful and affectionate firmness has conquered, and you have saved your child. And is not such submission the very essence of peace in a family, when the child yields and is forgiven? Will there not arise in the hearts of parents, and child, and the whole household, a stronger yet more tender love to each other from such a trial and such a reconciliation? Even so it is with the chastened and humbled sinner. No sooner can his subdued heart utter the cry, "Father, thy will be done," than he is again consciously clasped in the embrace of everlasting love, and enjoys anew the very peace of God.

But let it be most carefully remarked and understood, that it is by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and by that alone, that such contrite submissiveness is wrought in the otherwise stubborn heart of fallen and rebellious man. Without that, mere chastisement would never produce so gracious a result. Do we not often see men rousing all the energy of their proud hearts to stern endurance under some severe affliction? They will neither cry to man nor God for help, but desperately battle on till they sink and perish in the unequal conflict. Hence so many broken hearts—broken because they would not bend; and hence so many instances of that terrible crime, self-murder. But, when the Holy Spirit enters into the soul, he subdues its rebelliousness, humbles its pride,

inspires the hope of forgiveness, sheds abroad fresh love to God in the heart, and teaches the reclaimed penitent to pray. And, since the Mediator sends the Spirit who inspired the prayer, the prayer itself is peace; and, therefore, the prayer is itself its own answer in a very high degree, and to a very great extent. The great sin of man is rebellion against God—the great thing which man needs is peace with God; therefore, the prayer which arises from a heart subdued—a will renewed, a mind submissive—is itself a realization of that peace—is, therefore, the very thing for which the soul most longed, and, consequently, is its own answer, and, being infused into the soul by the Holy Spirit, is God's own answer to prayer. When a Christian truly, earnestly, and submissively seeks peace with God, in that very seeking he has what he seeks; for it was the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit given to him through the mediation of Christ, that prompted such a prayer. No humble and true believer could wish for more than to have his own will in perfect harmony with the will of his great God and Saviour.

How perfect is the peace which consists in entire submission to the will of our God and Father! Nothing can then occur greatly to distress us—nothing which we can with sinful eagerness desire. Are we in health?—we are the more able to labour in his service. Are we in sickness?—his grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is perfected in our weakness. We do not vehemently desire either health or sickness, either prosperity or adversity, either enjoyment or affliction; for we know that we could endure no one of them without Him; and we dread none of them, for with Him we can endure all things and enjoy all things. Therefore is it, that while a Christian can freely state to God what he thinks he needs, he will at the same time cheerfully leave it to God himself to grant or to refuse, according to his own infinite wisdom and goodness, making the pervading and ruling spirit of every petition and every prayer, “*THY WILL BE DONE*,” and this will certainly be granted. Why should we ever repine, or doubt, or dread, while the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth? Let even the sternest trials and severest sufferings come, so long as they are under his control. If he sees that to be necessary, it is, it must be well. It cannot but be for his glory, and for the good of those who truly love him. He cannot wrong, he will not injure us. Well may this peace keep both heart and mind; and, flowing as it does from eternity, it necessarily passeth all understanding, and is perfected in Christ.

III. *The proper state of mind in, and encouragement to, prayer.*

A few remarks may be enough to point out the proper state of mind

for a true believer when he approaches God in prayer. The language of the Apostle, in the first clause of these verses, is thus rendered in our common translation, "Be careful for nothing." This rendering may be regarded as accurate enough, if we give sufficient emphasis and meaning to the word "*careful*;" that is, if we understand that word to imply such a degree of care as to amount to *disturbing and distracting anxiety*. For this, and nothing less than this, is the meaning of the original expression; and that would be more evident than at present, had it been rendered, or were it understood to mean, "Let not any thing disturb or distract your minds." It will at once be evident that such a state of mind could not be a suitable one in which to appear before God in prayer. Why are you so disturbed and distracted? Why are you so intensely solicitous? Can you doubt his power, his wisdom, or his goodness? Banish all such improper thoughts and feelings. God is the hearer of prayer; and the proper spirit in which to appear before him is one of deep humility, acknowledging unworthiness, confessing sin; yet, in the name of Christ, supplicating forgiveness, and expelling fear by love. And if the true nature and spirit of prayer be best expressed by the words, "Thy will be done," then there ought to be no such distracting anxiety in prayer; for the will of God cannot but be done, and if we truly love and trust him, we can have no wish that it should be otherwise.

But the very idea thus obtained, and which expels all solicitude and anxiety, gives also the highest encouragements to prayer, suited to dispel every doubt, to inspire every hope, to hallow every feeling, and to quicken and strengthen every energy. We are indeed frail and helpless creatures, incapable of protecting ourselves from innumerable unknown yet surrounding dangers. But let not this disturb us, for our protection depends not on ourselves. The arm of Omnipotence is around us, and why should our minds be distracted with idle fears? We are sinful creatures, utterly unfit to appear in the presence of the high and holy God; but the Son of God has, in our nature and stead, by one sacrifice, finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; and we are both invited and welcomed to come to God through him, with the blessed assurance that those who thus come, God will in no wise reject. We are ignorant creatures, and know not what to ask. But the Spirit helps our infirmities, and is sent to be in us a spirit of grace and supplication, that we may by his teaching, and enlightening, and hallowing guidance, ask that only which is agreeable to the will of God, and in a spirit of entire submissiveness, and so asking, may never ask in vain. We are naturally in a state of rebellion and enmity against God, and might

therefore dread to enter into his presence. But the Holy Spirit, sent by the Redeemer to complete his great conquest quickens us from our deadness in trespasses and sins, creates us anew, takes away the stony and rebellious heart, gives us hearts of flesh, writes in those hearts the laws of God, dwells within us, making us temples of the living God, and gives to us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Thus we can come to God in prayer, dismissing all distracting anxiety about any possible thing, and submitting ourselves to his all-wise and holy will. This is peace, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and it will keep the heart and mind through Christ Jesus, our Redeemer and Intercessor. Thus to pray is itself the very essence of peace, for it hands over every suffering, every sorrow, every care to God, looking up to him in calm confidence for all that we can require in time, and for all that we can enjoy throughout eternity.

The encouragements to prayer which arise out of this view of the subject, are as innumerable as are the wants, and as vast as are the capabilities of man; if we ought not rather to say, they are as boundless and endless as the unsearchable riches of Christ. Instead, therefore, of losing our way amidst a multitudinous maze of details, let us return once more to the loftier regions of our subject, and endeavour to excite in your minds higher ideas of the vast importance of prayer, and the mighty encouragement to perseverance in it, than we are afraid even sincere Christians are in the habit of realizing. God has been graciously pleased to give us so much information respecting his eternal purposes, as to let us know how we may be elevated to the dignity of being consciously fellow labourers with him in accomplishing his glorious work on the earth. Shall we, then, sit in indolent contemplation of this, the wonderful dignity wherewith human prayer is invested, without attempting to realize it. Shall we not rather, like Daniel, pray for the accomplishment of that which we know to be according to the predetermined counsel of God? We do most unhesitatingly believe that the want of unity and earnestness in the prayers of Christians in general, is the proximate cause of the slow progress—I might say, the stagnation, perhaps the absolute ebbing back of vital Christianity in the earth. And could a general unity of feeling, of purpose, and of supplication be obtained and persevered in, we might hope ere long to see the banner of our common Lord and King borne onward in glory and in power, beyond what earth has witnessed since the days of the Apostles. Prayer is a constituted portion of the means; we defraud ourselves of the end by not using it—we may even be said, so far as we are concerned, to retard God's gracious intentions respecting us, by not asking what he is waiting to bestow. In consequence of not rising to adequate conceptions

concerning the nature of prayer, we pray as if we did not expect to be heard and answered; or, at least, as if we thought it very doubtful whether we should or not. And having concluded our listless supplications, we dismiss them from our minds so entirely, that we frequently could not recognise the answer, should it unexpectedly be granted. How different would be the spirit of our prayers, if we really felt our minds in communion with the mind of the Holy Spirit; if we felt that our humble voice was mingling with the counsels of eternity, and by forming the last link, was becoming the immediate agent! With what solemn awe would we weigh every petition, that we might never ask any thing contrary to the will of God, or likely to be hurtful to our neighbours or ourselves! With what fervency and love would we join the Church general in praying for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom and glory, whether with regard to the world or to those of our fellow-men with whom we hold more immediate and tender intercourse through all the friendly intimacies and dear relationships of life.

The extent to which this idea might be carried is literally boundless, and it ascends into the regions of the moral sublime, while it hallows all that pertains to the most limited domestic circle. By its means, even already, the saints might become the rulers and judges of the world; for the Lord Jesus Christ is the God of Providence, and he governs all things for the good of his Church, and will hear and answer the cry of his own elect. Of this one or two illustrations may be given. The welfare of any individual congregation must depend in a great measure upon the efficiency of its pastor. Now it cannot but be the will of God that his Church should prosper; and yet he may have suspended its prosperity upon its own prayers on its pastor's behalf. This, at least, is certain, that when people pray for their pastor, their petition is in its own nature such as it must be consistent with God's will to grant—not, perhaps, in the very way they prayed for, but in some way best for both and all. And would not the pastor engage in his arduous duties with increased alacrity and confidence, by having the blessed consciousness that many pious souls had been, or even then were, interceding for him at the Throne of Grace? Would he not feel, that whithersoever he went, the prayers of the saints had gone before him, and the answered blessings were around him, like the very atmosphere of heaven—that both he himself and all his efforts were doubly consecrated, first by the appointment of God to the edification of the Church, and next, by the prayers of the Church to the service of God.

Again, if our hearts and affections were filled with ardent aspirations for the universal extension of the Messiah's kingdom, our prayers would be warm and constant in behalf not only of those who labour in the

vineyard at home, but also and especially of those who have gone to carry the knowledge of the Redeemer far hence among the heathen. By this we both secure the blessing, and contribute our proportion of the means. If we did take such deep interest in Missionary success, and made it suitably known to those who have dedicated their lives to that most arduous and noble work, they would carry with them alike to the pathless desert and to the crowded emporium, wherein privations were to be endured, dangers to be encountered, and souls to be saved, not merely the feeble powers of single men, but they would be borne forward resistlessly by the united spirit, and have their souls filled with the collected might of the whole Christian community. What almost incredible difficulties have been surmounted by men who were upheld by the hope of future applause. Their hearts were great, for they were filled with the life and the glory of ages. And to the tried heart of the suffering Missionary, in the hour when the human weakness of his nature droops, and no kindred tongue speaks kindly words of encouragement and hope, to reanimate his desponding bosom, would it not be a most dear solace for him then to know, that the prayers of the whole household of faith are with him? Would he not then feel, that, though to the limited capacities of his frail mortal frame, the seas, and mountains, and empires which divide him from those whom his heart still fondly loves, may seem of insurmountable extent; yet the purest desires, the highest faculties, the most real existence of their true being is, at the very moment, by the power of Christian unity in aim and community in prayer, joined in closest and purest fellowship before the throne of their Father and their God! Thus, again, the spirit of prayer can raise the workings of nature into sublime harmony with the operations and the will of our Redeemer, the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of the universe.

Glancing once more, at a somewhat lower, yet very important view of the subject, let us mark its application to our common life. It is both our duty and our privilege to make, in our private prayers, specific supplication for particular objects. When trials and difficulties, and afflictions assail us, then may we spread the black page of our calamities, as Hezekiah did Sennacherib's threatening letter, before the Lord, and ask in faith, that so asking we may receive strength and direction from on high. We may not receive the precise answer for which we prayed; but our prayer itself is part of its own answer, and it may be the most important part: for since the whole business of a Christian's life is a process of training into conformity with the will of God, if his trial have occasioned a prayer in which that conformity of will was strongly felt, that prayer and that feeling may have been the entire object for which the trial was sent, and thus the prayer may be indeed its own appropriate answer. But every

SERMON LX.

THE STATE OF THE TIMES, AND THE CORRESPONDING DUTIES OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE REV. WALTER M'GILVRAY, GLASGOW.

"Men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."—
1 Chron. xii. 32.

(Substance of a sermon preached before the Presbytery of Glasgow on Wednesday the 2d of
April 1845.)

THE passage in which these words occur, refers to one of the most important events in the life of David—viz. his elevation to the throne of Israel. On the death of Saul, he succeeded to the half of his dominions, which was erected into a separate kingdom under the name of Judah, while the other half, under the name of Israel, was ruled over by Ishbosheth the son of the deceased monarch. This last scion of the house of Saul, having, by an act of treachery but too common in these times, been slain, "as he lay in his bed-chamber," the people of Israel, admiring the eminent qualities of the king of Judah, who had already proved himself to be the wisest ruler and the greatest warrior of his age, invited him to take possession of the vacant crown—an event which raised him to the sovereignty of the entire kingdom.

There was, however, yet remaining in the land a colony of the original Canaanites, who were strongly disaffected towards their Jewish conquerors, and who therefore not only refused to concur in the election of David, but resolved to resist his authority by force of arms. For the purpose of reducing this party to subjection, it was necessary that warlike preparation should be made. With this view, the men of Israel, collecting their strength, came to the assistance of the king from all parts of the country; and the sacred historian, as he enumerates the various tribes which assembled together on the occasion, notices at the same time the characters of their leaders—the numbers composing the several detachments—and the particular qualities by which they were respectively distinguished; and while he dwells chiefly on the valour and military achievements of the rest, he says of the children of Issachar that they

were "men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

The peculiar tribute which is thus paid to the tribe of Issachar—a tribute which distinguishes them most honourably from all the other classes of their countrymen, will appear the more remarkable when we look at the smallness of their number, and the comparative seclusion in which they lived. In point of numerical strength, they were by far the least considerable of all the tribes of Israel. While the rest could muster their thousands, and tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands, the children of Issachar, though "all their brethren were at their commandment," could only furnish a body of two hundred men. But their lack of numbers was more than counterbalanced by their pre-eminent zeal, sagacity, and discipline—qualities which rendered them the ablest advisers in the council, as well as the best soldiers in the camp. But how, it may be asked, did they come to acquire the superior wisdom and intelligence which is here ascribed to them? Were they more favourably circumstanced for obtaining information, and for observing the signs and duties of the times, than the general body of their fellow-subjects? Had they access to the private circles of the capital, or to the secret conferences of the court? On the contrary, they lived remote from cities—buried amid the tranquil retreats of the rural provinces, away from the sordid cares and the sickening crowds, and the unquiet rumours of the metropolis, breathing the air of freshness and of freedom among their native mountains. But though they dwelt at a distance from the noisy din of the world, they were not prevented from attending to the progress of public events, or taking the interest that became them as good subjects in the welfare of their country. From their peaceful solitudes they looked forth with a calm and dispassionate eye on the various movements that took place; and having leisure to reflect on the nature of these movements, to compare them with the past transactions of their history, and to test them by the principles of the Divine Word, they were in a better condition for forming a sound judgment regarding them, than those who might have an opportunity of seeing them through a closer, but, for that very reason, a more contracted and clouded medium. They saw them as they rose above the disturbed and passion-tossed atmosphere in which the immediate actors were involved, and could therefore discern more accurately both their bulk and their bearing; and in consequence of the patriotic attention which they paid to these subjects, and the devout and intelligent consideration which they gave them, it is here recorded to their credit, that they were "men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

In this matter the Children of Issachar have left an example which is well

If, then, we were required to state in one word what we conceive to be the grand capital characteristic feature of these times, we would say that it consists in the general prevalence of *NEGATIVE INFIDELITY*, or, in other words, in the general *want of faith* on all subjects, whether moral, political, or religious.

As to *positive* infidelity, there never perhaps was less of it in this land. Among all the great writers of the present day, there is not one who has ventured to attack Christianity as a system, or who has come forward to advocate opinions directly and avowedly infidel. The few who are left to support the sinking cause of unbelief are so notoriously insignificant, that their names and writings have but little influence with any party, and none at all with the intelligent portion of the community. This, we need not say, is a rare and remarkable circumstance. We all know that, from the earliest dawn of English literature, down to the recent days of Gibbon and of Hume, some of the most distinguished authors of this country were found among the assailants of the Christian faith; and although there is at this moment a larger number of publications issuing from the press in a single year than in the last age came from it in the course of twenty, or, perhaps, we might say, in the course of half a century, yet it is a very striking fact, that, among the teeming mass of literary works thus presented to the public, not one of the smallest note can be mentioned that denies the evidences of revealed religion, or defends the dogmas of systematic infidelity. How are we to account for this? Is the country, as a whole, so much more religious than it was; or, to put the question in a better form, Are the *leaders* of public opinion—the rulers, the senators, the great writers of the realm, on the one hand—or are the *reflectors* of public opinion, the conductors of the periodical press, on the other—are these, if less avowedly infidel, more really Christian in their spirit and sentiments, than they were? If they say little against the Gospel, do they say much in its favour? If they do not contend openly for the falsehoods of the deist, do they contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints? It is notorious that they treat the whole matter as an open question. They deny nothing, but they affirm nothing; or, in other words, they have no fixed principles on the subject at all. If actual infidels, they will not proclaim their infidelity; if theoretical Christians, they will not assert their Christianity. And why? Just because they have no earnestness of conviction, no moral stamina, no strength of belief, to take a firm grasp either of the one or of the other. Their foundations are destroyed, and their faith is dead. They are without the spirit of credibility, and therefore without the substance of a creed. They have no confidence in what is true, and they have no confidence in what is false;

and hence, like a vessel without a guiding compass, or a determinate course, they are floating hither and thither as the wavering current of caprice, or passion, or opinion, may chance to drive them.

We have said that this negative infidelity characterizes the representatives of the age in relation to *all* subjects, whether civil or religious.

Look at their mode of dealing with the *civil* interests of the realm. What are the principles on which they proceed in the regulation of these? Why, no one can tell. There were sometime ago two great parties in the state, the one opposing the other, and each standing on distinctive constitutional doctrines, which governed their line of policy, and formed the basis of their practical measures and speculative maxims. But what is the aspect of matters now? You need not be told that the parties in question have both abandoned their ground so completely, that they are at this moment in a state of the most entire and unaccountable confusion. Like two hostile fleets that have slipped their cables, or lost their anchors, they are seen falling across each other's lines, and have become so entangled and intermingled together, that they do not appear to know where they should go, or what they should do. Nor is this bewildering state of things—this confounding interfusion of political differences—confined to the national representatives alone. It pervades all ranks and classes. The parties that stood forth in stern opposition to each other, but a very few years ago, are now broken asunder and dispersed; while the causes of strife that were then held so important, have, one by one, worn out and passed into oblivion. What is the reason of this? The reason, we fear is, that the earnest heart of the nation has sunk into the cold apathy of infidel indifference. Doctrinal truths are no longer regarded as essential. Great principles are sacrificed to mere temporary expedients. The pedantic calculations of a mean, soulless, creedless Utilitarianism are substituted for the ennobling beliefs—the time-honoured systems—the inspiring and chivalrous associations, that once kindled the mighty eloquence of British statesmen, and awoke into glorious enthusiasm, the majestic energies of the British people. Oh! Freedom, resting on the basis of principle, and cemented by the spirit of Reverence and Faith, is a holy and a beautiful thing! But freedom without truth, without trust, without venerable recollections, without distinct moral foundations—the freedom that has neither a creed to believe, nor a code to observe, is the offspring of political infidelity, and will become in its turn the source of social degeneracy and national decay!

If this, then, be the spirit in which the political representatives of the country are transacting its civil affairs, look at their proceedings in reference to its *religious* interests, and you will be at no loss to perceive

that their practice here is distinguished by the same want of settled principle. Observe how they have acted in the various cases of this nature which have lately arisen, and which have called for adjudication and adjustment at their hands. Mark, for example, the line of policy pursued by them towards the evangelical *Non-intrusionists of Scotland*. In the Providence of God this party was brought into circumstances which required them to stand up for the regal prerogatives of Christ. They contended that he was the sole Head of the Church, and the Sovereign Ruler over his own house. They entreated the authorities of the land to recognise this principle, and to relieve them from the unwonted and unwarranted interference of the civil courts, while acting under the command of Christ, in the simple discharge of their spiritual duties. But how was this humble, faithful, Scriptural appeal received? The appellants were told that the civil tribunals had decided against them, and that the Government were resolved to support that decision, and to maintain the supremacy of the law at all hazards. The consequence was, that the men who had the fidelity to plead for their Master's rights, were compelled, rather than abandon their principles, to surrender their temporal emoluments, to sacrifice, in short, all they were worth in the world. The parties who drove them to that resolution—who coldly and heartlessly allowed them to become the victims (although the ungrudging and uncomplaining victims) of their own conscientious integrity, would need to be well assured of the firmness of the ground on which they stood, in dealing with such men as they did. But was that the case? Were they actually so much concerned about vindicating the authority of the law as they professed to be? Their conduct on a subsequent occasion will furnish us with an answer as decisive as it is signally disgraceful.

You all remember the noted case of the *Irish Arians*. This body, so far from upholding the prerogatives of the Redeemer in any sense, deny his divinity, reject his atonement, and strenuously labour to degrade him to the rank of a mere creature. In doing so, we need not say that they utterly destroy the foundation of the sinner's hope, and defeat, as far as in them lies, all the essential purposes for which the Church of Christ was established upon earth. These professional subverters of gospel truth applied to our civil rulers to protect them in the possession of property which they had unrighteously usurped, and which they tried and struggled under false pretences to retain. The courts of law had declared against them, and the property in question was about to be taken from them and transferred to the rightful owners, who had been obliged to establish their claim to it by a course of expensive and protracted litigation. Mark the conduct of the Government when they were

at last appealed to by this band of baffled and convicted spoliators ! The very same men who had so sternly withstood the claims of the Scottish Protestors, on the ground that the civil courts had decided the matter, stepped in at once to the rescue of the Irish Unitarians. Disregarding the legal decisions which had been given in the case, they directly interfered to arrest the due course of law ; and with this design they hastily passed an act, the effect of which was, to frustrate the pious intentions of the dead, to rob the cause of evangelical truth of funds bequeathed for its benefit, and to bestow these funds on the avowed and inveterate enemies of that cause, who were also the parties by whom they were previously appropriated, and unjustly retained. Where was there any principle of law, or right, or religion in this ? Who does not see the absolute hollowness—the painful and miserable destitution of all truth, consistency, and Christianity, which the whole transaction betrays !

But there is yet a third case which will serve to illustrate still more clearly the point which we are attempting to prove, and that is the case which is attracting so much attention at present. We need not remind you that the constitution of this country is, in a distinct and peculiar sense, *anti-Catholic*. Our wise and pious ancestors knowing, both from reason and from sharp experience, that the principles of Romanism were, as they still are, intensely hostile to the civil and religious liberties of mankind, adopted every precaution to prevent the readmission of these principles into the political machinery of the State. With this view, they not only took care to purge every particle of the Popish leaven out of the body politic, but they also passed a variety of laws, the express design of which was to protect our reformed doctrines and our Protestant institutions from the dreaded encroachments of this subtle and formidable antagonist. This was the paramount idea—the great ruling purpose—which they had before them when settling the kingdom on its present basis. Their object was to make Britain a *great Protestant State*—a *national embodiment* of the *principles of the Reformation* ; and, hence, every part of its political framework was regulated and modelled according to this design. You do not, however, require to be told of the change which has taken place in regard to this subject. It is well known to all who have the least “understanding of the times,” that a spirit has of late years prevailed among the political leaders of this country, tending towards a closer alliance with the Church of Rome. These leaders having long ceased to regard the characteristic principles of that Church in the light in which they were viewed by our forefathers, or rather, they having ceased to attach importance to religious doctrines or distinctions of any kind, have been assiduously,

though covertly, labouring to break down our Protestant defences, and to obtain the countenance and support of the State, for the politically excommunicated system of Popery. As a proof of their success, the legal securities which our reforming legislators took so much pains to devise—the national protests which they wrought into the very fabric of the constitution, and inscribed with religious care on the very altar of the State; these have all been lately and summarily swept away, leaving but a mere nominal barrier between the jurisdiction of the Pope and the possession of the British crown. Besides this, you are all aware that Romanism has been endowed in the colonies; loaded with official favours and flatteries in Ireland; fostered with the most fatal insidiousness in the very bosom of the Church of England; and now, the time being considered fully ripe it is proposed to engraft it openly and directly on the constitution of the country, by endowing its principal seminary of instruction out of the national treasury, and placing it among the permanent establishments of the kingdom. This surely is strange legislation! Just look again at the different cases to which we have adverted, and mark the utter confusion of every thing like right and wrong by which they are pervaded. The Presbyterians of Scotland came into collision with the civil law on a point of conscience, and the law was driven relentlessly against them; the Arians of Ireland came into collision with it on a point of covetousness, and the law was purposely altered to relieve them! The one party, who were exalting the Redeemer, were degraded; the other party, who were degrading the Redeemer, were exalted! The Free Church was charged with maintaining that the civil power was subordinate to the ecclesiastical; and though she solemnly denied the imputation, she was yet, for the bare suspicion of it, scouted, insulted, and cast off with scorn; the Popish Church asserts the doctrine in question, openly and unequivocally, and still she is caressed and complimented, and taken into immediate alliance with the State! The loyal Protestants of Ulster besought the Government to make some provision for the maintenance of their academical professors, and their application was gruffly refused; the disaffected Romanists have had a munificent grant for that purpose most graciously offered to them—nay, gratuitously and zealously forced upon them—a grant not merely sufficient to support their professors, but also to educate the great body of their future priesthood! What is the meaning of all this? It just means that the rulers of this country are in these matters actuated by a spirit of the most reckless and regardless expediency. They are merely balancing between contending parties, trying to conciliate or control them as circumstances may require, but not attempting to legislate on any fixed principles, whether civil or religious. These considerations

plainly prove (what we have already affirmed, and what we deem it of much importance to mark), that we live in an age of precipitance and shallowness, and shift ;—an age, which trusts not to doctrine, but to discipline ; not to tenets, but to tactics ; not to great truths, but to small intrigues ; not to the simple force of conscientiousness and moral honesty, but to the sordid manœuvres of diplomacy and craft ;—an age clever, indeed, but the reverse of comprehensive ; abounding in ready talent, but barren in reflective genius ; singularly conversant with practical things, but miserably wanting in profound thoughts ;—an age, in short, that has taken its impress from business, more than from books ; from the crowded mart, more than from the solitary study ; from the many talkers, more than from the few thinkers ;—an age, above all, perilously deficient in moral sentiment, utterly devoid of those reverential qualities and spiritual aspirations, which are connected with all that is great and noble in the immortal nature and destinies of man ;—an age, in one word, that lives by *sight* and not by *faith*, and that is, therefore, daily sinking into dimness and decay, under the deadening influence of NATIONAL INDIFFERENTISM OR NEGATIVE INFIDELITY.

Such, then, being the leading and distinguishing feature, as we at least conceive, in the character of “the times,” it remains to be considered “what Israel ought to do ?” The space which we have already occupied will not permit us to do more than merely touch on this point ; but we would say, in a few words, that, if it be the duty of the Church to stand in the gap and to arrest the progress of wrong principles both in persons and in parties, both in congregations and in communities—if this be her bounden and appointed duty, there never was a period when she was called upon to interfere more solemnly and strenuously than at the present moment. The circumstances we have detailed are sufficient to dictate the course which she “ought” to pursue. They obviously require—

1. That she should maintain a clear and decided testimony on behalf of the great fundamental principles of Divine truth ;—holding them forth to the view of the country in all their naked, definite, discriminating, and uncompromising character ; and demanding either a thorough assent to their authority, or a distinct disavowal of them altogether ;—protesting with all her might against the formal profession of these principles on the part of those by whom they are yet publicly sacrificed and officially renounced. Let her act in the spirit of Elijah, when surrounded by the congregated thousands of Israel, on the summit of Carmel. Let her bring them closely and directly to the test, saying, as he did, “*If God be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him.*” Without wishing to speak in the language of self-commendation, or to

derogate from the just claims of other religious bodies, we may yet venture to affirm that there is no branch of the Church of Christ in these lands that can with greater consistency adopt this course than that with which we ourselves have the privilege of being connected—a Church which has, by the grace of God, been enabled, in an unprecedentedly faithless and mercenary age, to maintain such a battle in defence of abstract doctrines, and to make such a sacrifice for her Master's sake. Is it not manifest that God has "given her a banner to display because of the truth"—that he has planted the standard immediately in her hand, and that he has called her forth to the very forefront of the host that is now summoned, as by a loud trumpet-peal, to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Is it not to her that the challenges of the enemy are sent, and the bitterest defiances of the enemy directed? Hear ye not the blustering sons of Anak, the great Goliaths of the armies of Gath, raging against her with all the fury of conscious fear; fixing their swollen gaze upon her as the tried and intrepid antagonist that is destined to smite them on the forehead and to lay them prostrate on the earth! Ho, then! ye descendants of the Covenanters, arise! Grasp firmly your well-used weapons! Cry, "Scotland to the rescue!" and march forward to the fight! On, soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ! the contest may be sharp, but the victory is sure!

2. But while the nature of "the times" requires a determined effort to resuscitate the sinking power of principle, it also calls for a vigorous and combined movement to repel the creeping invasions—the subtle but forceful and successful encroachments of error. Suffer us again to remind you that the spirit of Popery is the strongest element that is at present at work among the leading men of our day. They may not be conscious of it; and let us hope, in the judgment of charity, that they are not; but it is perfectly clear that the influence of that dark, and mysterious, and tremendous system is upon them, and that they are just now engaged, as its fascinated instruments, in promoting its designs. One of the most fatal consequences of their proceedings is the direct footing which they are giving to this system in the constitution of the country. We have already said that that constitution is not only intrinsically Protestant, but systematically anti-Catholic. For many years, however, the policy pursued by our statesmen has had the effect of producing a gradual revolution in the political structure of the realm, the final result of which will be to alter the moral position which Great Britain has hitherto held among the leading kingdoms of the world;—to lay an arrest on the distinguishing principles through which she has risen to the "high and palmy state" in which she stands at present; and to introduce elements not only different from, but absolutely destructive

of, those to whose fostering influence she is indebted for her unrivalled power, her solid freedom, and her mighty renown. Is the country prepared to acquiesce in such a change—to make such a sacrifice for the purpose of conciliating a party who never will, and, from the nature of their principles, never can, rest contented until they gain the ascendancy? Are the people of the British islands disposed to renounce their Protestant rights, their Protestant institutions, and all their memorable Protestant distinctions? Shall the name of England be no longer associated with the sacred watchword of “*Religious Freedom?*” Can she never again raise that thrilling cry on the ocean-floods or on the battle-fields of the world, and say to her brave sons, “*Hoc signo vinces?*” Will she never more be able to lift up her lone but lofty head in the conventions of princes, or in the general assembly of the nations, and be recognised, and feared, and honoured, as the *Imperial Spirit of the Reformation*—the majestic *Representative of Protestantism?* Ah! surely there is cause enough to fear that this proud distinction is passing from her—that this glorious vision is breaking and melting away. The sacred charter of our privileges has fallen into the hands of the Philistines, and we may soon be left to say, in the dying words of ancient patriotism, “The glory is departed from Israel, for the Ark of God is taken.”

But, however the country may feel on this subject, the *Church*—by which we mean the whole body of those who adhere to the doctrines of the Reformed faith—the Church will not, cannot, dare not, keep silent. Adopting the memorable language of him who waged his grand life-battle with this rallying and recruited foe, she will say, “I am in the place where it is demanded of me to speak the truth, and therefore the truth I speak, impugn it whose list.” Like him, she will feel that there is “more danger to this country from one mass than from a hundred thousand armed men;”^{*} and, acting on this deep and devout conviction, she will dash aside with utter disregard the flippant sneers of the pert rhetorician, and the sullen scowls of the sordid partisan, and tell her mind in a tone that will compel the proudest in the land to listen to her voice. But she will not only state all that truth may require her to say, she will show “what Israel ought to do.” She will call upon her people to lay aside their merely political differences and sectarian distinctions, and to unite together in defence of “the common salvation.” She will especially charge them to use every lawful means within their reach for the purpose

^{*} Such was the opinion of John Knox, a man who knew something more both of Popery and Protestantism than either Lord Brougham or Mr Macaulay. The bitterly contemptuous language which these individuals applied to the petitioners against Maynooth was as unwise as it was unwarrantable. Considering that the petitioners were but expressing opinions held by Luther, Knox, Milton, Newton, Locke, Boyle, and such men, we suspect that the Peer and the Commoner will be regarded as rather more arrogant in their tone than even their intellectual pretensions will justify.

of removing from the great council of the realm those faithless men of *all parties*, who have betrayed the interests both of their country and their creed; and who, by their ignorance, their infidel laxity, and their political servility, have shown themselves unfit to be trusted with the management of our public affairs. Above all, she will demand that a reputable country like this should be governed by *men of principle*—that, as a Christian nation, we should be represented by *Christian statesmen*—that, as a Protestant kingdom, our civil and religious liberties should be placed under the guardianship of *Protestant rulers*.

But there is reason, last of all, for a spirit of humiliation and prayer on the part of the Church. We have been as a people boastful of our privileges, though yet very thankless for them, and very thoughtless about them. For many long years this country has been settling down upon her lees—staying herself upon her wealth, upon her wisdom, upon her warlike resources, upon her civil and commercial power—yea, upon every thing but upon her God. Those who had “understanding of the times,” and who were marking the spirit of pride, security, and carnality that was spreading among all classes, foresaw that a day of darkness and abasement was evidently approaching; and it is now clear that a crisis of the most disastrous character has arrived in the history of Great Britain—a crisis which it seems impossible by any ordinary means to arrest, and yet a crisis, which must either end in Popish domination, or in the crash of a revolution by which this great empire shall be rent in pieces. Where shall we look—to whom shall we go—what shall we do in this deep and overwhelming emergency? Oh let us cast ourselves down before the mercy-seat. Let all the faithful in the land lay the case of their country before the Lord, and plead for it after the manner of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah in ancient times. Let them especially entreat that he may arise and defend his own cause, and fulfil the promise he has given, that “when the enemy cometh in like a flood, his Spirit will lift up a standard against him.” And though the cry that resounded through the streets of Nineveh, “yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed,” may be breaking in upon the apprehensive ear of faith; yet if we, like the people of that city, cover ourselves with the sackcloth of repentance and sit down in the ashes of humiliation—if we turn every one from his evil way, and cry mightily to God, “who can tell if God also will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” Let all who know the Lord’s name—all who like Jacob “have power with God,” pray that he may bless us and cause his face to shine upon us, that so we may be saved. Amen.

SERMÓN LXI.

CHRIST THE PLANT OF RENOWN.

BY THE REV. JOHN LAIRD, INVERKEILLOR.

"And I will raise up for them a plant of renown."—Ezek. xxxiv. 29.

THE great object of the Bible is to exhibit the glorious excellence of Christ. The central truths of revelation are those concerning Christ and his work; and everything else that is introduced, is brought forward as bearing on this great and important subject. With the inspired writers Christ is evidently all in all; and they make it their great business so to testify of him, and so to describe his work and his blessings, that he may be the all in all of our souls. To exalt and magnify Christ, we have not only magnificent descriptions of his person, and character, and offices, and work, but many striking emblems are introduced to illustrate his excellence. The most glorious objects in nature are employed to heighten our conceptions of the glory of Jesus, which is after all but very faintly and imperfectly shadowed forth by them. Is the man who has been waiting with intense longing for the dawn, cheered by the sight of the morning star, as the harbinger of a new day? You know Christ says of himself, I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. Is the sun in the firmament enlightening the world with his cheering beams, and warming us with his genial rays, felt by all to be a glorious object? You know it is promised with reference to Christ, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Is the rose remarkable for its beauty and fragrance, and the lily for its tender loveliness and sweetness? You know Christ says of himself in the Song, "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys." Is the apple-tree remarkable for its delicious fruit? The Church says of Christ, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." Are some plants renowned for their usefulness and excellent properties? It is here said of Christ, to give us some idea of his glorious excellence, "I will raise up for them a Plant of Renown."

That the Plant of Renown here means Christ there can be no doubt ; and there are many other passages in which a similar figure is employed as illustrative of the excellence of our Immanuel. It is said in Jeremiah, " Behold the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch ;" and we read in Zechariah of the Lord's servant the Branch, and of the man whose name is the Branch. In Isaiah, too, Christ is promised as a " Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots." It is true, he is not always spoken of as a Plant of Renown. On the contrary, it is said in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, " He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." But we have no difficulty in reconciling these apparently opposite views of Christ. In the one, we behold him in his humiliation ; and in the other, we contemplate him as our risen and exalted Lord. It is quite true that he grew up in the world as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground ; for he was descended from David at a time when the royal family had become mean and despised in Israel—he was laid a helpless babe in the manger at Bethlehem—he lived all his days poor, and despised, and sorrowful—and at last he was put to death, as a tender plant is crushed by the foot of the ruthless passenger. But, it is equally true, that he is the Plant of Renown ; for although crushed as a tender plant in his death, he sprang up again in his triumphant resurrection, and glorious ascension into heaven ; and by the preaching of the gospel, he is every day becoming more and more renowned all over the world. His fame shall yet reach the utmost ends of the earth, and shall be talked of in heaven throughout all eternity. He is renowned in the world now as the Saviour of sinners ; and he shall be renowned in heaven for ever as the Tree of Life, which grows in the midst of the Paradise of God.

In discoursing farther from these words, I shall endeavour to shew in a few particulars in what respects Christ may be called the Plant of Renown. And while we meditate on these particulars, may the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ, and shew them to our souls, so that we may all regard him as supremely excellent and altogether lovely.

1. In the *first* place, I remark that some plants are renowned for their rareness. Anything that is rarely to be met with in this world, is all the more valued, because it is uncommon. If it be really valuable in itself, it is prized not merely because of its intrinsic excellence, but doubly prized because it is rare. Let anything be discovered with which the human mind was before unacquainted, immediately it becomes a matter of engrossing interest, although perhaps its real importance may be comparatively small. Every one knows that what we see every day, and can at any time enjoy, soon ceases to affect us deeply. It is on this pri-

ciple that many blessings, whose very excellence is that they are common, are less valued than they ought to be, just on account of that which is their chief recommendation. Things that are rare and seldom to be met with, are most highly esteemed and most eagerly sought after. A rare plant—an uncommon specimen of any kind—excites unusual interest and attention.

Now, in this respect, Christ may well be called the Plant of Renown. He is the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God. If a fellow-man could have redeemed us by his death, there would have been nothing rare in such a sacrifice, but the victim had merely been one of the many millions of our race. If a world, with all its inhabitants, had been given for our ransom, there had been nothing rare in the sacrifice, but the offering had merely been one of the many worlds which have sprung into existence at the creating word of Jehovah. If even an angel had been given for our redemption, it could not have been said that there was anything rare in the sacrifice; for an angel is only one of many myriads of equals that are before the throne of God. But when God has given for us—not a world, the like of which he could make again—not a creation, the equal of which he could call into being at pleasure—but his own fellow—his only-begotten—his co-equal and co-eternal Son, to whom no angel is equal or second—with whom no creature can enter into comparison at all—O, surely Christ must be esteemed precious, because he is rare—unequalled and unapproached by any.

Every view you can take of Christ will lead you to the same conclusion. If, from thinking of him as the Son of God, you turn to contemplate him as Immanuel, God with us, you see that he is indeed rare and precious. That God and man should be united in the person of Christ, is the rarest wonder that has ever been heard of, either in earth or among the hosts of Heaven. This wonder may not strike an unheeding world. A blind man is not in the least affected by the most astonishing sight which fills all others with amazement; and no marvel, surely, that poor blind sinners are not struck with wonder at that which shall be wondered at in Heaven for evermore. But, let heedless sinners pass by as they may, it is nevertheless a rare and unparalleled thing—yea, the very wonder of wonders, that the nature of God and the nature of man should be united in the person of Jesus. Great indeed is the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh.

I have said that in every view Christ is rare and precious. To be convinced of this, think not merely of his original glory, nor of his mysterious person; but think also of what he is and has done for his people. Truly we must say, he is the unspeakable gift of God—a gift

that stands out prominently from all the other gifts of our heavenly Father—a gift with which no other can be compared—yea, with whose infinite value the united value of all other gifts together is not to be put into the balance. As to his love, if we try to speak of it, we must close by saying, that it passeth knowledge. As to his sufferings, if we try to describe them, we must admit that they exceed all our conceptions, and that there never was any sorrow like unto his sorrow. As to his riches, if we try to reckon them, we must end with the confession that they are unsearchable riches. As to his excellence, both in himself and as the Saviour of his people, if we try to speak of it, we must admit, after all illustrations and comparisons, that it is unparalleled and inconceivably great. In this view, undoubtedly, Christ may well be called the Plant of Renown.

II. In the *second* place, I remark that some plants are renowned for their beauty. Some are celebrated for the gorgeous richness of their colour, and others for the delicate paleness of their hue—some for the elegant form and loveliness of their flower, and others for the stately and majestic appearance of the plant itself. The beauty of this world very much depends on its plants and flowers, and of these some are more renowned for their beauty than others. And most assuredly, Christ may in this respect be called the Plant of Renown. In him we see every variety of colour and shade, which, combined, constitute the perfection of beauty. The most lovely sight which this world ever saw was the character of Jesus. Most men, indeed, saw in him no form nor comeliness, no beauty that they should desire him; but this is as easily accounted for as it is to explain why a blind man sees no beauty in the most lovely flower that blooms in his path. Those whose eyes were opened, saw Christ's glory when he was on earth—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And all believers still see Christ to be fairer than the sons of men, yea, the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. And no wonder that this is their estimate of Christ; for in him we see every conceivable excellence that can adorn and make lovely the most perfect character. Every thing which pure and holy beings can admire, is to be seen in Jesus. View the graces separately, and you see each of them perfect in Christ—humility in his becoming a man—meekness in bearing insults—gentleness in administering reproofs—patience in enduring sufferings—devotedness to his Father's will, which made him say, that in the doing of it he had meat to eat which the world knew not of—devotion, which wearied not of whole nights spent in prayer—benevolence, which knew no bounds in the bestowment of blessings—heavenly-mindedness, which made him,

though in the world, not of it. These graces shine each of them gloriously in the character of Jesus, and all of them combined, constitute that perfect excellence which saints and angels shall admire for ever. Christ, in his character, stands out prominently from all others, alone and unrivalled in his beauty—holy, harmless, undefiled, and altogether separate from sinners. His example is the perfect model for your imitation, and the more you imbibe his spirit, and are conformed to his image, the more you approach to absolute perfection. O, then, strive to be more like him, who, on account of the exquisite beauty and loveliness of his character, is called the “Plant of Renown.”

III. I remark, in the *third* place, that some plants are renowned for their fragrance. Oftentimes plants and flowers that are most beautiful are least fragrant, but in some plants beauty and fragrance are combined. Sweet smelling flowers and fragrant plants are felt even here to be most delightful and refreshing; but in the East, there are plants of such rich fragrance, as we can have no conception of at all in these northern climes. To pass a garden of aromatic herbs, when the gentle breeze causes the sweet spices to flow forth, is perfectly delightful to the weary traveller. And in this respect, too, Christ may be called the Plant of Renown. He has been anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. All his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces. “A bundle of myrrh,” says the spouse, “is my well-beloved unto me;” and again, “My beloved is like a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi;” and again, “Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee.” What a sweet savour there is about all the graces and excellencies of Christ! You cannot come to the contemplation of his character without feeling that you are breathing a pure and holy atmosphere, grateful as the spicy breezes of the East to those who are faint and weary. What a sweet fragrance there is in the very name of Jesus! That name which he bears, because he saves his people from their sins, is indeed as ointment poured forth. It has a delightful fragrance even in the presence of God. The death of Christ is an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour, and the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake, seeing he hath magnified the law and made it honourable. And anxious souls feel that it has a delightful fragrance, when their hearts are cheered, and revived, and comforted, as they behold the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. Never was weary traveller, when like to faint under the burning rays of an eastern sun, so revived and refreshed by the spicy breezes, as poor souls, ready to faint under a burden of sin, and amid the trials

of the world, are refreshed and cheered by the sweet savour that there is in Christ. O my brethren, if you wish a little reviving from time to time in your pilgrimage, see that you keep near to Him, who, on account of the sweet fragrance of his name, is called the Plant of Renown !

IV. In the *fourth* place, I remark, that some plants are renowned for their healing virtue. It is a proof of the goodness and benevolence of God, that, while this world, in consequence of the Fall, is filled with disease and pain, there are medicinal plants whose application has a healing efficacy. Some plants are renowned far and wide for their medicinal qualities. The balm of Gilead was so. The balm used was a precious gum extracted from the balm-tree, and was esteemed very useful in healing venomous bites and other dangerous wounds. And in this respect, as well as those already mentioned, Christ may be called the Plant of Renown. From the Saviour on the cross there flows a healing virtue to cure all the diseases of our souls. When he was on earth there went virtue out of him to heal all the people, whatever disease or plague they had ; yea, such was his healing power, that whosoever touched even the hem of his garment was made whole. And still Christ is the great Physician of souls, and he cures all the spiritual diseases of his people by the application of his own blood. The blood and grace of Jesus are the precious balm. It is balm extracted from the wounded tree of life—from the pierced side of Immanuel ; and it is effectual in curing the envenomed bite of the Old Serpent the Devil—in mortifying the wounds which the arrows of conviction have made in our souls, and in completely healing the loathsome disease of sin. Let the man whose spirit is wounded by a sense of guilt and by the terrors of the Law, apply to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh peace, and speedily he is relieved from pain, and his wounds are mollified and bound up. Let the man who mourns the prevalence of the disease of sin in his soul, and is ready to cry, under the burden of indwelling corruption, "O wretched man that I am !" let such an one apply to the blood of Jesus, and he feels his conscience purged from dead works to serve the living and true God. The disease may not be all at once eradicated, but, as the believer comes day by day to the healing balm—the cleansing blood of Jesus—his disease is gradually removed, and his soul prospers and is in health. If, then, you desire your soul's diseases to be effectually healed, you must apply by faith to the healing balm. Balm can be of no use unless there be an application of it to the wound, and neither can the shed blood of Christ be of any benefit to you if it be not sprinkled on your hearts by the Holy Spirit. Be persuaded then to make daily application to Him, who, on account of the healing efficacy

of his blood, is called the Plant of Renown, and the Tree of Life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

V. In the *fifth* place, I remark, that some plants are renowned for the shelter they afford from the scorching rays of the sun. Even in our own climate it is often most refreshing, when oppressed with the summer heat at noon, to recline under the shade of a spreading tree. And how much more must this be the case in the East, when, under a vertical sun, the heat is so very oppressive! How delightful for an eastern traveller to come to a shady tree, under whose wide-spreading branches he may lie down upon the cool ground and rest himself! How delightful for the eastern shepherds, when they have conducted their flocks to the place of rest at noon, to lie down and rest themselves in the shade! But O, how infinitely more delightful for the poor sinner to sit down under the shadow of the Plant of Renown.

Christ may well be called the Plant of Renown, because of the refuge which anxious souls find under the shadow of his wings when they are scorched by the terrors of the Law, and oppressed by a burning sense of the Almighty's wrath. Careless, unconcerned sinners, whose eyes have not been opened by the Holy Ghost, do not long for such a refuge; but those who have been truly awakened and convinced of sin eagerly desire it. The terrors of the Law will allow them no rest, and the scorching rays of Divine wrath beat upon their heads, so that their souls are disquieted and cast down within them; and nowhere can they get relief from this oppression till they come under the shadow of the Plant of Renown. They may seek refuge under the covering of the general mercy of God—under the thin veil of their own righteousness—under the miserable screen of their religious profession and privileges—but it is all in vain; the sun still beats upon their heads, and they are ready to faint, seeking rest and finding none. But when they descry the Plant of Renown, and lie down under its shadow, they obtain rest and peace to their souls. The righteousness of Christ is a covering which the wrath of God cannot pierce through. To them who are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation. The branches of the trees of Paradise were no covering to guilty Adam, but under the shadow of the Tree of Life the awakened sinner may lie down and take quiet rest, assured that the wrath of God will never reach him any more.

The believer finds refuge in Christ all his journey through. Even after he has fled to Jesus as a refuge from wrath, he is often oppressed by the burden and heat of the day. He has many trials connected with his spiritual experience, being often filled with doubts and fears about his state,—being sorely distressed by the temptations of Satan,—and

being left disconsolate under the hidings of God's face, and the withdrawal of the comforts of the Holy Spirit. He has many trials, too, as a pilgrim in this vale of tears, being liable to bitter griefs and disappointments,—being subject to disease and pain,—and being visited by sore and heavy bereavements. When ready to faint under such trials, he may fly anew to Jesus to hide him. The Plant of Renown is ever at hand to afford shelter to the Christian pilgrim in every storm that may overtake him on his journey, and its shade is an effectual shelter. It is not like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night, but like a tree whose branches are spread wide enough to overshadow you, and whose foliage is so thick that the rays of the sun cannot penetrate through it. Be persuaded, then, my brethren, to betake yourselves to this only true refuge. If you pass by this tree in the wilderness, you must be exposed to the scorching beams of the sun as before. If you really desire refuge from wrath, and a sweet resting-place amid the trials and difficulties of your heavenward journey, be persuaded to sit down under the shadow of the Plant of Renown.

VI. I remark, in the *last* place, that some plants are renowned for the excellent fruits which they bear. This is a quality for which the plant here spoken of is renowned; for the consequence of its being raised up to God's people is, that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land. And in many other passages Christ is compared to a fruit-bearing tree. In the Song he is compared to the apple-tree, and the spouse says not only, "I sat under his shadow with great delight," but adds, "and his fruit was sweet unto my taste." In the book of Revelation, it is said of the Tree of Life, which John saw in the heavenly city, that it bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded its fruit every month. And this is undoubtedly a striking illustration of the excellence of Christ. If it be delightful to a weary traveller to lie down at noon under the cool shade of a spreading tree, it is especially so when the tree is laden with mellow and delicious fruit, which the traveller may pluck and eat for the quenching of his thirst. In this respect, every believer finds Christ to be the Plant of Renown, and it is while he feeds upon Christ by faith that he is no more consumed with hunger in this barren land.

Do you ask me what are the fruits which grow upon this plant of renown, and which nourish the souls of Christ's believing people? I answer, they are all the blessings of the new covenant, and these include all you need or can desire, either for time or for eternity. All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours; for ye are

Christ's, and Christ is God's. Tell me any excellent fruits for which your souls long, and I will shew you there is abundance on the Plant of Renown. Do you desire pardon? then listen to that promise, "I will remember your sins no more." Do you desire acceptance with God? then hear how believers speak of their privilege, "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Do you desire adoption into God's blessed family? then "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon believers that they should be called the sons of God?" Do you desire sanctification and growth in grace? then hear the Saviour's prayer for his people, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Do you desire heart peace? then remember the dying Redeemer's legacy, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Do you long for joys that may fill and satisfy your whole souls? then seek to experience something of the joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit, and of the blessedness of having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Do you desire promises suitable to every emergency? then behold the exceeding great and precious promises which hang like golden fruit in rich clusters on the Plant of Renown. And do you desire ever to cherish a blessed hope of heaven? remember it is said, "Whosoever believeth shall never perish, but have everlasting life." But the time would fail me to enumerate all the fruits of this tree. All believers are ready to testify that Christ's fruit is indeed sweet unto their taste. And yet how little do they know of that excellent fruit in this present life! The fruits they now taste and find so delicious and refreshing, are just like the bunch of grapes from Eschol,—an earnest and foretaste of the sweet fruits of the promised land. And if all these fruits which believers enjoy in time and in eternity grow upon this tree, may it not truly be called a Plant of Renown?

Do you desire, my brethren, to partake of the fruits of salvation which the tree of life bears? be persuaded to come to Jesus, and apply to him by faith as your own Saviour. It is not enough that the tree be close beside you, and be richly laden with the most precious fruit; you must put forth the hand of faith, and pluck the fruit and eat of it that you may live for ever. The branches of the tree are, so to speak, stretching forth over your heads, weighed down towards you with all the fruits of salvation, and you have only to put forth your hand and take the fruits which your souls long for. If the fruits of the Redeemer's purchase do not satisfy you, it must be because you do not seek to enjoy them—because you do not believe in Christ—because you will not come to him that you may have life.

SERMON LXII.

THE GLORIFIED JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO JOHN IN VISION,

BY THE REV. JAMES GRIERSON, ERROL.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—REV. i. 17, 18.

OF the manifestation of Jesus, vouchsafed to the aged and only surviving Apostle, he has given a most sublime description in the seven verses immediately preceding those of the text. The effect of what he heard and saw was such, that he "fell at his feet as dead." The sensible presence of the Godhead had not from the beginning this effect on the mind of man. Before the introduction of sin into the world, he had daily communion with God, and that was the noblest and the richest source of his daily felicity. But in the case of fallen man, and while in the body, even though converted and reconciled unto God, the sensible presence of Deity—the exhibition of terrible Majesty—is felt to be altogether overwhelming.

So felt the exiled and venerable Evangelist. He was greatly afraid; but the Lord was graciously considerate to the infirmity of his servant. He did not withdraw the vision or obscure its brightness; but, with a gracious and condescending familiarity, calculated to fortify and encourage his soul, he moderated its effects on his mind. "He laid his right hand upon him, saying unto him, 'Fear not.'" This was an act of such condescension, as no other man ever experienced. Its gracious familiarity was most affecting and encouraging. The glorified Redeemer thus gave John the means of recognising him as his former and unchangeable friend, amidst all the surrounding and surpassing splendours of his glorified state. He laid his right hand on him, and accompanying this act of gentleness, kindness, and familiarity, with a corresponding expression of voice, said to him, "Fear not." As if he had said, "Hast thou not known? Dost thou not know me, John? Hast thou forgotten who took thee to be with him, when he raised to life the ruler's daughter—when he ascended the Mount of Transfiguration—and when he entered the garden of Gethsemane? Hast thou forgotten on whose bosom thou didst lean at the last supper—who recognised thee from the cross—

and who from thence committed to thee the care of his own mother? Be not afraid then, it is I."

It was not only, however, by an act of gracious familiarity, and by words of gracious encouragement, that the adorable Redeemer sought to dispel the fears of the Apostle. For this purpose, and as a suitable introduction to the revelations which he was about to make to him, he addressed to him several important declarations concerning himself;—a declaration, *first*, of his eternal Godhead; *secondly*, of his incarnation and death; *thirdly*, of his being again alive for evermore; and *fourthly*, of his having the keys, or absolute sovereignty, of the invisible world and of death.

I. The glorified Redeemer made a declaration of his eternal Godhead. "I am the First and the Last"—"I am he that liveth," or "the Living One."

This is a distinct and emphatic declaration of his Godhead. One of the titles of Jehovah is, that he is "from everlasting to everlasting God." This is in substance applied to Christ, in that passage where the Apostle speaks of him as "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.) The application is attested by the Father himself, when, in the same epistle (chap. i. 8), and addressing the Son, he is introduced as saying, in the language quoted from the forty-fifth Psalm, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

The language of this declaration is such as could not be applied, without blasphemy, to any mere creature, however exalted in nature or office. He may say at any moment of his existence, "I am living;" but he may not presume to say, "I am the Living One." This is equivalent to the incommunicable name under which, as expressive of independent, eternal, and unchangeable existence, Jehovah addressed himself to Moses, and gave him a commission to the children of Israel: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said unto him, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM, hath sent me unto you." Yet Jesus, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," did not hesitate to appropriate to him the attribute which that name implies. When reasoning with the Jews, he used this solemn and remarkable expression, "Before Abraham was, I am." *I am*, you perceive—not *I was*; and as an unequivocal proof that they understood him, by using this expression, to lay claim to the attributes of Godhead, we find that it roused them to the highest pitch of indignation, so that they took up stones to stone him.

Now, the blessed Redeemer, in the verse before us, made this sublime

declaration concerning himself, for the purpose of reassuring and encouraging his afflicted and terrified apostle. The latter was overpowered by the splendour of his terrible majesty, but was thus reminded, both in the most sublime and most soothing manner, that all that majesty was *on his side*, and that the Author, and Preserver, and Prince of Life was both able and ready to defend and comfort him, aged, forlorn, oppressed, and exiled though he was. There are few persons who, for the testimony, or as the disciples of Jesus Christ, can have greater tribulation to encounter, or deeper sorrows to experience, than the aged exile in Patmos. His Divine Master had assigned to him very peculiar duties. He had, at the outset, reminded him, as well as others, of the necessity of leaving father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and wife and children, for the sake of the gospel; but, at one of the most interesting moments of his mortal life, even when it was approaching its close, and when he was suspended in agony on the cross, he had *added* to the domestic cares of the disciple whom he loved, by consigning to him the charge of that otherwise unprotected and desolate mother, who then felt that the infamy and agony which He was undergoing before her eyes, was indeed as "a sword piercing through her own soul." While this sacred charge continued—in other words, as long as Mary lived—though John was by no means exempted from the trials to which the rest of the disciples, and the Church in general, were exposed, these trials seem to have come upon him more gently than on others. Ultimately, however, they came upon him in their most unmitigated severity, so that, even when far advanced in life, nay, when laden with the increasing infirmities of old age, he was subjected to all the additional miseries of poverty, seclusion, and exile. Yet, under all these complicated evils, the presence and support of the Living One were sufficient to strengthen and comfort him: And if this was the case then, there is no reason to fear that any disciple can ever be so circumstanced, or his afflictions so overwhelming, as that no adequate support or consolation can be furnished.

II. But, secondly, the glorified Redeemer here made a declaration of his incarnation and death, "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One, *and I was dead.*"

It is evident that he could not have died in the nature alluded to under the first or second of these expressions. Before the Living One could die, he must have become a partaker of a mortal nature, in which nature alone he could ever taste of death. The wages or penalty of sin was death; and it was this, therefore, which the substitute and redeemer of sinners had to undergo. The appointed Redeemer, accordingly, took to himself a mortal nature, and *that* the nature of *man*, because it was sin-

nery of mankind, and not sinners of any other species, that he undertook to redeem. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Yet, in becoming a partaker of our nature, he did not become a partaker of it in its fallen and sinful state. Of our nature itself that is no essential part. It has existed in a state in which it had no sin, and it shall do so again. Had he, indeed, been a partaker of that which was in itself sinful, or even in a sinful state,—in other words, had he personally been chargeable with sin, he would himself have been exposed to the wrath of God, and never could have made atonement for the sins of others. But, while it was thus necessary that the Redeemer should be possessed of a mortal nature—the nature of those whom he came to redeem, but not in the state in which it existed in the case of those who needed redemption, yet, if he had not been possessed—inherently possessed—of an infinitely higher and holier nature than this, he could neither have atoned for us by his death nor justified us by his righteousness—He could neither have sustained the wrath of God nor have wrought out and established a righteousness applicable to others besides himself. It was the Living One who became man, and died, that, by his death, he might "obtain for us eternal redemption."

This second declaration, also, was admirably calculated to inspire the exiled Apostle, and every afflicted believer, with courage and consolation. The incarnation and death of the blessed Redeemer afford to us the most affecting demonstration of his love. What will be withheld from us by Him who has not withheld from us even his own life? And what should a believer not be willing to endure for Him "who endured" for us "the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God?" The Apostle, in his state of banishment, was separated from the society, the employment, and the ordinances that he loved; but what was all this compared with the abasement and privations of Him who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, who, for a season, was made lower than the angels, and who was exiled, as it were, from the glory which he had with Him before the world was? He not only came down from heaven, and tabernacled among men, but endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, nay, "was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." By reminding his aged servant of his having been put to death in the flesh, he contributed not only to allay the alarm which his glorious and unexpected presence had necessarily produced, but to revive and encourage him under all the hardships and horrors of that hopeless banishment to which persecution had consigned him. The thought of this is still the source of the believer's comfort, in the house of his pilgrimage, and under all

the trials of his lot. To him the death of Christ is still as the tree of life. When he reflects on that wondrous death, and on the not less wondrous love which prompted the Saviour to undergo it, and then thinks on his own individual sufferings and sorrows, whatever be their nature or their amount, he is still enabled to exclaim, "Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

III. We have now to observe, in the third place, that, in the words of our text, the glorified Redeemer made a declaration of his being again "*alive for evermore.*"

This is evidently different from the first truth that was here proclaimed. It is not a re-assertion of his being the Living One. It is a solemn declaration that he is alive for evermore, *in the nature in which he had been dead*, and particular emphasis is manifestly intended to be given to this announcement. It is introduced with the exclamation, "Behold!" as if for the purpose of intimating its importance, and of directing to it the hearer's special attention; and it is followed by a term which expresses, not as some have imagined, the solemn assent of the inspired *penman*, but the solemn "amen!" of the speaker—the peculiar "*verily*" of the Saviour himself, the usual term which he was accustomed to employ for the confirmation and enforcement of some truth of peculiar magnitude. His death did not, and could not, dissolve the mysterious union which had been formed between his human nature and his Godhead. "Being raised from the dead, he dieth no more: death hath no more power over him." He is "*alive for evermore*" in each of his three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. As our Prophet, he still "*speaketh from heaven,*" by his Word and Spirit teaching us. He is also a Priest "*made after the power of an endless life,*"—"an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." He "*hath an unchangeable priesthood.*" In this capacity, "*he ever liveth to make intercession for them that come unto God by him.*" As a King, in like manner, his power is not more absolute and unlimited than it is endless. He is not only the Head, and the only Head of his body the Church, and the Head of every individual member of it, but he is "*the Head over all things to the Church.*" "*All power is given unto him, in heaven and in earth,*" "*angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.*" The government is on his shoulders, and "*all judgment*" has been "*committed unto the Son.*" In his glorious person, our nature is associated with that of the Godhead in occupying the throne of the universe. With all the sympathies of man, and all the attributes of God, he thus reigns, and "*shall reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*" He administers the whole system of Providence,—yes, in the nature of

man, administers it—in subservience to that glorious scheme of redemption for the sake of which he condescended to become a partaker of that nature.

What an encouragement was this consideration also to John! and what an encouragement is it still fitted to be to all suffering, and especially to all persecuted saints! Jesus did not suffer his own enemies to prevail against him, till his hour was come; neither will he suffer those of his people to prevail. He will make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. He will regulate, or rather he has already regulated, every thing connected with the nature, the number, the measure, and the continuance of the trials to which his people shall be subjected. They may be “persecuted,” but shall “not be forsaken;” they may be “cast down,” but shall “not be destroyed.” The Apostle in Patmos seemed to be lost to the Church and to the world; while, in reality, the most momentous part of his ministry—the preparing and unfolding of “the revelation of Jesus Christ”—was yet to be fulfilled. Some have preached and made converts by the patience of their sufferings. They have awakened, subdued, and edified more souls in this way, than by their most zealous and energetic ministrations. Their meekness under injuries has melted some whom their most powerful arguments failed to convince, and their rousing appeals to alarm. Their death itself has sometimes, through the grace of God, given effect, at length, to those truths which it was the business of their lives to inculcate, but which, in many instances, they had appeared to inculcate in vain.

IV. We come now to consider the fourth declaration which the glorified Redeemer here made for the encouragement of the suffering and affrighted Apostle;—“I have the keys of hell and of death.”

Both in the Old Testament Scriptures and in the New, the word *hell*, in the common version, is employed as the translation of two words in the original, which are very different from each other in meaning—the one signifying the place of *future punishment*, and the other, which is of more frequent occurrence, signifying the state of the dead, or the *invisible world*, without regard to their happiness or misery. It is necessary to observe that, though our word *hell*, in its original signification, was better fitted to express the latter idea than the former, in its modern and now most ordinary meaning, it is quite the reverse. To the ordinary reader, it now naturally suggests the place of future punishment. Yet that is not the place immediately referred to in the verse before us. The word in the original is that which is employed to denote the invisible world, in both its two great departments, of happiness

and misery, though, as in the case of the rich man and Lazarus, with a great gulf between them.

Of this invisible world, and of death, the Redeemer here declares that He hath the keys—that is, the sovereign and absolute control. Into these regions none can enter, and from them none can issue, or return, without his express authority or appointment. This is the declaration which we have now to illustrate, and in order to the practical purposes which we have at present in view, we shall endeavour to do so, in the first place, with respect to *death*.

1. Christ has “the keys of death.” He is “the Prince of Life,” and the Conqueror—yea, the destroyer of death. He “hath life in himself, and he giveth life to as many as he pleaseth.” He “both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” His sovereignty over death is exercised in regard to the *time* of its taking place. Life cannot be taken away one moment before his appointed time, and it cannot be prolonged one moment after it. Are there none of you who, in the course of your own experience, have met with very striking instances of this truth? Are there none among you now alive, whose lives have been spared, only through the interposition of his merciful Providence? When we hear of any one’s death, we are apt to think first, and inquire most, as to its secondary and subordinate causes. We are apt to ask, of what disease, or by what casualty, did the individual die? Did he die in youth, or in old age? Was his death occasioned by natural causes, or by what is ordinarily, though inconsiderately, called accident? Was it gradual, or was it sudden? But be these things as they may, Christ alone has the power of life and death, fixing the bounds of our habitation, and the times which we cannot pass. A little reflection on what has often occurred within the circle of our own observation, will be sufficient to impress us with this important fact. Some one, for instance, has been seized with a dangerous and alarming illness—so alarming that one physician is sent for after another. The chamber of sickness is darkened, and already seems as the chamber of death. The cheek of friendship is already wet with the tear of grief. The voice of attendants has, by a sort of natural restraint, sunk into a cautious whisper. All in the household go softly, and, wondering at the unwonted silence of others, the children themselves become silent. The physicians, in silence, make their observations, and retire to consult together. Their science, experience, and skill, are of no avail. They have to intimate that there is no hope! Spiritual ministrations are then resorted to—alas, if not till then!—but even these are more for the edifying and comforting of friends, than for any direct advantage to the unconscious sufferer. The servant

of God engages in earnest prayer, but the soul of the afflicted appears so near its departure, that he does not venture to pray for its continuing in the body ! Yet, strange to say, it *does* continue, although, for a season, *that* is all that can be known. At length there is a slight revival—a faint symptom of recovery. The symptoms then daily improve, and now it is the subject of admiration and gratitude, that, through the mercy of Him to whom the issues from death belong, the individual who had been given over unto death, is brought back as from the gates of death, and the mouth of the grave !

But, on the other hand, cases sometimes occur, which are the very opposite of this. When men are not thinking of distress—when their health and constitution seem most vigorous, or when recovery from illness seems almost certain, in a moment they perish—some of them the very persons, perhaps, whose life, on a former occasion, had been so signally preserved ! How strikingly does all this demonstrate that Christ has “the keys of death !”

Nor does his power over death extend only to the fixing and ordering the *time* at which it happens. It extends no less to the *causes* by which it is produced, and the *whole circumstances* with which it is attended. It is alike foolish and sinful, therefore, whether in health or in sickness, to vex ourselves by harassing inquiries on any of these subjects. Our times are wholly in his hand.

As a suitable improvement of this subject, let us rather ask what *preparation* we are making for the momentous event itself—the event which is as inevitable as the time and circumstances of it are inscrutable ? What use are we making of the life which has hitherto been preserved, and which, in the case of some, may have been prolonged by some such signal recovery as has already been described ? As in the case of King Hezekiah, a period of not less than fifteen years may have been added to our mortal existence. Now, had it at the time been stated by the God of our lives, as the condition of such a boon, that we should forsake our sins, whatever they were, and our besetting sins in particular, although the effort of doing so were like the plucking out of a right eye, or the cutting off of a right hand—that the pleasures of sin should be renounced—and that, instead of living any longer in habitual forgetfulness of God, we should daily and diligently seek him, praying to God always, and passing the time of our sojourning here in his fear—would the boon, even under all these conditions, have been despised or rejected ? And has the mercy which has actually been bestowed on us been less signal or precious, because it has been granted *without* any such express statement or stipulations ? Surely the duty of devoting to Christ the life which he has prolonged, is not the less undeniable because his gra-

alous purpose of prolonging it was not intimated by a prophet, sent as a special messenger to our sick-bed. Oh! how should we be abased, if we have practically forgotten "the vows which our hearts formed, and our lips uttered, when we were in distress?"

2. We have to consider, in the next place, that Christ has "the keys of the invisible world." This is true with respect to both its two great departments, familiarly known by the names of *heaven* and of *hell*. This is a most extensive, nay, boundless kingdom, and peopled with beings of different orders and conditions, compared with whom, even in point of number, the myriads of living creatures that replenish our air, the earth, and the sea, sink into insignificance. In all places of his wide dominion, there are beings to own or adore him as their Lord. It contains all the souls of all the departed generations that have existed, even for a moment, in this nether world; and it shall yet receive the souls of all who now exist, or who have yet to come into existence. It contains the "angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word"—those "ministers of his that do his pleasure." His dominion extends over intelligent beings who, both in splendour and in multitude, greatly exceed the stars of the boundless firmament, which, bright and far removed as they are, may be regarded rather as the visible gems of his crown than as the limits of his empire. Over this mighty empire he exercises a righteous and absolute authority. "He openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Not an angel of light can come forth to minister to an heir of salvation—not one of the powers of darkness can come forth seeking whom he may deceive or devour, without the appointment or the permission of him who is Lord of all—not a ransomed spirit can enter heaven, nor a reprobate and impenitent spirit be cast into outer darkness, without his warrant. He has the keys of both the vast provinces of his invisible kingdom.

(1.) He has "the keys of *heaven*." As he has the power of determining the time and circumstances of every one's *death*, so he has the power, and he alone, of ministering to his own purchased and purified ones an entrance abundantly into his own everlasting kingdom, and his own all-glorious presence. His words are, "I am the resurrection and the life"—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." If, after the Fall, man lost all right to the tree of life in the earthly Paradise, much more must he, in himself, be without all right to "the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God," in heaven. It is true that he has prepared a place for all his true disciples in his Father's house of many mansions, and that, previously to their entrance, each of these disciples shall be fully prepared for so glorious an abode, being made perfect in holiness, and beautified with salvation.

However polluted they once were, none shall then be able to "lay any thing to the charge of God's elect." Still it is, even then, through grace that they are saved and received into his rest. Even then, the keys of heaven are in the hand of Christ; and the sense of obligation to his unmerited and unrequited grace was never at any previous moment so intense and overpowering as when he opens to them and bids them welcome, saying, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

And while Christ alone has the right of admitting into heaven, so he alone has the right of determining *when* the admittance is to take place. To human view, it appears as if his people were sometimes called away *too soon*. Their family, their friends, the state of the Church, and the state of the world also, seem to require their presence and their services. To them to live is Christ. It is the chief object of their life and their ambition to serve him in the advancement of the Gospel, and wonder, if not disappointment, is felt that they are not permitted to abide. It must be remembered, however, that though the Master had need, or was pleased to make use of them, for a season, and though he honoured them not only with distinction, but with success, yet he was not dependent on them. Besides all this, they might have been spoiled with too much applause—they might have fallen into inconsistencies which would have proved a stumbling-block to others, and into offences most injurious to their own peace—or they might have been involved in trials which they were peculiarly unqualified to undergo.

At other times, again, the people of God may seem to be detained on earth *too long*. After long experience, they feel that this is not their home, and that their happiness here is by no means in proportion to the measure of their graces—that the farther they advance in the divine life, the more are they grieved every day with the evil conversation of the wicked. For the sake of that very world, however, whose deeds they reprove, and in the midst of which they must cause their light to shine, they should remember that important ends may be served by their continuing to glorify God by their infirmities and tribulations. In due time they shall reap, if they faint not. Though "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which," to themselves, "were far better," they feel that, "nevertheless, to abide in the flesh may be more needful to others." Christ himself must determine. He will not keep them from the presence of his glory one moment too long; and while, in their present tabernacle, "they groan, being burdened," let them be careful that they may be able to add, "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

(2.) But, *lastly*, we have to consider that Christ has "the keys of

hell." It is at his behest that Satan is not loosed, and that sinners, now on earth, have not already been bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the tormentor, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." All judgment has been committed unto the Son. Those who have long been despising and rejecting him, he has hitherto spared; and though they may still abuse his mercy, it is just this abuse that shall at last fit them for destruction. Some live as if there were not a God who judgeth on the earth—no future time of reckoning, and no place of endless punishment. This, however, will not alter the fact or diminish the danger. They refuse to kneel at the footstool of his grace, but they "must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Whatever may have been the history of their unbelief while here, there will be no room for it when they go hence. Unbelief itself cannot go with them beyond the limits of this present life, although its woful consequences shall pursue and cling to them for ever. If no *faith* is needed in *heaven*, no *unbelief* can be continued in *hell*. In both regions, all is sight, all certainty, all present and felt reality. At one time, they were taught to think salvation easy—a thing within their reach at any time—and for the sake of which, therefore, they needed not give up the pleasures of sin till the very last. At another time, the adversary of souls would have them to conclude that they had sinned so long that any hope of salvation were alike infatuated and presumptuous; so that, despairing of pardon, they became desperate in wickedness. The day which extinguishes their unbelief, shall also expose all their sophistries. All attempts at defence or vindication shall be precluded or put to shame. Once they pleaded that they could not do otherwise than they did in the indulgence of sin, but *then* they shall have the consciousness that they *could*—that, however strong might have been the temptation, it was always with their will, and not against it, that they sinned as they were tempted. It is this consciousness that shall give such poignancy to their anguish. They may accuse one another, and perhaps with too much justice. Companions in iniquity may become each other's fiercest accusers. They may indulge in the bitterest recriminations—children upbraiding their parents, and parents their children—husbands upbraiding their wives, and wives their husbands! Still, they shall individually endure the undying worm and unquenchable fire of remorse, for they shall individually be conscious that the guilt of sin is *their own*. But in addition to this, they shall have to endure the more immediate inflictions of the wrath of God—feeling all the while that that wrath is just, though aggravated by the circumstance that his mercy had previously been despised, and feeling, at the same time, that their enmity is unimpaired, either by the effects of his justice, or by the remembrance of his mercy.

SERMON LXIII.

THE BEAST AND THE CURSE ON THE WORSHIPPERS OF THE BEAST.

(Preached 30th March 1845, in consequence of the appointment of the Commission of Assembly.)

BY THE REV. ADAM CAIRNS, CUPAR.

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation."—REV. xiv. 9, 10.

IN the preceding verses of this chapter, there is contained, *first*, a symbolic description of the true Church of Christ, the appropriate kingdom of the Lamb, who is represented as standing on Mount Zion, encompassed with the hosts of his redeemed; and, *second*, a prophetic account of the commencement and success of a mighty work of revival of the Gospel against all the efforts of a hostile power, termed Babylon, whose ultimate fall is loudly proclaimed, as involving the overthrow, by the wrath of God, of all the supporters of this system of impiety. The progress of this desperate conflict between this mystical enemy of the truth, called Babylon, and the Lamb on Mount Zion with his devoted followers, is described as occurring under the ministration of three angels, who rejoice in the business assigned them of speeding onwards to its destined triumphs the cause of the pure Church of Christ. Without going deeply into this part of the prophetic scheme, let it suffice to say, that, as the picture given us, in the opening of this chapter, of the true Church of Christ, is evidently intended as a counterpart to that fictitious church, described in the latter half of the preceding chapter, where it is strikingly symbolized as "a beast coming out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, while he spake as a dragon," and as no reasonable doubt can be entertained that the ecclesiastical and political system boldly figured in these remarkable terms is the Romish Church, then we have little difficulty in perceiving that the movement attributed to the first angel, verse 6, refers to the faithful preaching of the Gospel by Christ's true servants, even in the darkest times of Papal superstition; but more especially to the outburst of light at the era of the great Reformation, when the Bible was brought from its seclusion in the cell

of the monk, or taken from the dusty shelves of unvisited libraries—when the dead languages, in which its priceless treasures were buried, were unlocked by the key of sanctified learning, and, for the first time in the course of centuries, preachers of the blessed evangel went forth to all nations, in the spirit of the primitive apostles, declaring to every one the glad tidings of salvation, through the righteousness of the one Mediator. Since that illustrious era in the history of the world, the words of the prophecy have been literally fulfilled. An angel has been flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,” and the burden of the doctrine thus all but universally published is a direct condemnation of the idolatries of Rome, giving worship to the Virgin Mary, to saints, and angels—is an exclusive ascription of praise to Jehovah—an inspiring call to fear God and give glory to him—to worship him, and him alone, that made heaven and earth, the seas, and the fountains of water.

The second angel announces the approaching fall of Babylon, and states the reason of her doom, “because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;” that is to say, she prevailed upon all the nations comprehended in the symbolical earth to partake of her blasphemous errors,—for spiritual fornication is a treacherous forsaking of Christ, the true spouse of the Church, and giving to other lords the honour and obedience due to him alone. It is fornication to have faith in any other Mediator than the Lamb on Mount Zion—to reverence or fear any other name,—or to expect the blessings of divine mercy and grace from any other saviour.

The message of the third angel, which is the subject of this discourse, conveys a very solemn prohibition against every sort of union or fellowship with this implacable enemy of God and his Christ. It is a message so explicit, that none can misunderstand its import—it is a message so full of terrors to the favourers of Babylon, that no enlightened Christian can read it without deep concern. “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.”

We will briefly consider the designation here given to the great apostacy.

I. The anti-christian power mentioned in the eighth verse as Babylon, that great city, is spoken of here as “the beast and his image.” Now, these epithets refer us to the language of the prophet in the foregoing chapter, where, in the eleventh verse, we read of a beast com-

ing out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, and speaking as a dragon; and again, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, where we are informed, that "an image is made to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." To discover who this latter beast was, we have to go back to the opening of the thirteenth chapter. There we read "of a beast having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy;" then, in the third verse, we read of this beast, that one of his heads was wounded to "death, and his deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beast." It is to this beast so wounded and so healed that an image is made—an image that speaks—an image that exercises imperial authority—an image that has power to slay those who refuse to worship it; and to cause all descriptions of men, whether small or great, rich or poor, free or bond, to receive a mark—a token of submission to its will, and of agreement with its purposes, in their right hand or on their forehead. It is manifest at a glance, that the beast thus described occupies the very seat, and is the legitimate successor of the great red dragon (chap. xii.), or the pagan, infidel, persecuting, Roman dominion;—a power which had seven heads, seven forms of government, the last of which, that of the Cæsars (Emperors), was destroyed for a season, or received a deadly wound; and which prodigious empire was at last divided into ten kingdoms or horns, all of them retaining the original character of the dragon, unrelenting hostility against the Lamb of God and his true disciples; and exercising their respective authority in subservience to the blasphemous spirit of the beast, to persecute and overcome the cause of the glorious Gospel.

In prophetic language, a beast is the symbol of an anti-christian civil power—the sign of an earthly government imbued with a spirit of irreligion, wielding its secular strength, not in obedience to the will of God, but in malignant opposition to his glory.

A horn is the evidence of might, and signifies a kingdom; and the beast having ten horns is a kingdom divided into ten powerful sections; a beast having ten horns crowned, is an empire divided into ten principalities or reigning powers.

When Rome was governed by its imperial Cæsars, she was the acknowledged sovereign of the world. No dominion had before appeared of such vast dimensions and colossal potency; and all tribes of men who came in contact with its force, finding resistance hopeless, submitted to the iron yoke, and confessed that Cæsar was universal potentate. Now, this unparalleled influence was directed by Cæsar, with determined resolution and satanic malignity, to suppress, in its infancy, the cause of the Saviour. He condemned, he crucified, the Holy One and the

Just; and never did Cæsar's hostility abate, until, by God's righteous judgments, he was driven from his throne, and Rome, the mistress of the nations, became the barbarian's spoil. But time rolled on, and the scheme of prophecy was yet farther developed. Out of the sea, or of the tumultuous agitations of warring nations, in which, as in a raging sea, pagan Rome was swallowed up, there at last arose another mighty power, similar, but not the same. It was a beast, a civil government, instinct with the serpent's hatred of the Lamb of God, conjoined with a beast of peculiar attributes, having two horns as a lamb, yet it spake as a dragon. There was a strange union of things contrary—the lamb and the dragon—ecclesiastical power and a secular infidel authority, distinctly blended in surprising combination. It arose in the place of that dragon power which divine wrath had smitten with destruction. It was similar, though not the same. It was in the same place, with its seven heads and ten horns, declaring that the earthly dominions that had sprung into existence upon the ruins of the empire of the Cæsars, the ten kingdoms into which the symbolical earth was divided, were still to use their power in submission to the mind of the dragon, as the slavish abettors of the mystery of iniquity, and the blaspheming adversaries of the true Gospel. The two horned lamb is evidently an ecclesiastical system—an apparent or professing Church, animated not with the Spirit of Christ, but with the pitiless animosity of the Devil, and seeking by means of the secular or temporal authority of its ten infidel kingdoms, to compel the whole world to yield to its pernicious sway, and exterminate every trace of Christian purity and truth. Well, who is the image of the beast?—that is, who is now like the Cæsar of ancient Rome? Who sits on that throne from whence the command went forth to crucify the servants of the Lord Jesus, to make martyrs of his holy apostles, and to deluge the earth with the life blood of his saints? Who is now seated on the throne of Cæsar? It is one who is made in the image of the beast—the very picture of the beast, seated in the chair of supremacy, having a triple crown upon his head, hailed with adorations by his kneeling electors as the vicegerent of God, having rule over the souls of men. We now understand the symbolic language of the prophecy. He whom his servile worshippers venerate as Pope—he whose decree is law to rulers and counsellors alike—he whose anathema is regarded as the curse of Heaven—he who has planted his foot upon the neck of kings, and at whose command civil authorities put forth their utmost strength to perpetuate idolatry, and to execute his terrible excommunications—he who by his conjured servants exerts an absolute despotism over the consciences and souls of all ranks and orders of men, and to whose usurping might small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, are alike slavishly obe-

cient and devoted—he is the image of the beast. Never did *Cæsar Augustus* possess such far-reaching authority as this—never did *Cæsar*, in the flush and pride of undisputed empire, clothe himself with such lofty arrogance and super-eminent majesty.

II. Consider what it is to worship the beast and his image, and so become subject to the plagues with which God will at last vindicate his holiness, and avenge the quarrel of his elect.

It is quite obvious, that, in the view of the spirit by which the prediction was delivered, to receive the mark of the beast and his image in the forehead or in the hand, is equivalent to worshipping an idol. Al-lusion is here made to the general practice in apostolic times for masters to impress their name or mark on the forehead or hand of their slaves, and for devotees to stamp on those conspicuous places of the body the title of the idol whom they delighted to worship. To inscribe a mark on the forehead, is a visible sign to all who see us, that we are not our own, but are the bondsmen of that master or idol whose name we bear. In other words, this brand is the avowed and public profession that is made of religious faith; for profession makes known to others what we are, and who is the God whom we have chosen. And this guilty mark, infamous as the blood-stamp of Cain, is legibly engraven on the forehead of the misguided people who, refusing to read and believe the infallible word of God, to listen to the teaching of the divine counsellor, to walk in the light of the revelation of Christ, prefer the mental darkness of a debasing superstition, and are pleased to commit their immortal souls to the keeping of a fellow-sinner. It is no matter of choice or indifference what we shall believe in regard to God, or what shall be the nature and objects of our religious profession. He hath made known to us his holy and immutable will. The mind of God for his own glory and the salvation of sinners, is fully disclosed in the volume of his book. He hath spoken, and we must hear. He hath appointed, and we must obey. He hath shewn us the path of life, and we must follow it with implicit confidence. Popery, in all its essential doctrines, is a system that denies the faith of Christ, and erects an idolatry in its stead. It ascribes to a mere man—a proud and scornful sinner—that power and infallibility which are *Jehovah's* incommunicable prerogatives. It exacts from the blinded people an abject surrender of every faculty of the soul, an homage due alone to the Lord of the conscience, and the righteous Judge of all. It exalts and magnifies a human being, who needs grace every moment to pardon his own sins—to speak marvellous things against the God of gods—to exercise the office of a Mediator—to ordain a sacrifice

for sin different from that which was once offered by the Lord Jesus on the cross, and to convert into a deity the bread of the sacramental supper. It closes the Bible, and interdicts it to the very creatures to whom God has in mercy sent it. It erects altars where God has no altar, offers worship to others than to him, invokes in prayer creatures that can neither hear nor help, and creates a purgatory as if in mockery of a sinner's hopes and a saint's anticipations, as if to pour contempt on the promises of the God of truth, and the finished work of the adorable Saviour. The people, who deliberately prefer this system of elaborate falsehood, and heaven-daring blasphemy, to the belief which the Bible requires, and the worship which it teaches; who reject, at the bidding of a lordly priesthood, the exclusive mediation of God's own Son, the light that shineth from an incorrupted Gospel, and the service ordained in an unpolluted sanctuary; they who openly avow their willing acceptance of the man of sin—Babylon, with her continued adulteries—in preference to the Lord Jesus Christ plainly exhibited in the Word of life, *they* are branded with the stamp of idolatry, the mark of the beast—their God is not Jehovah—their Saviour is not the innocent Lamb who stands on holy Mount Zion; and here, in the language of eternal wisdom, is the inevitable fate of all such, "They will be made to drink of the wine of the *wrath of God*." Again,

The *hand* is the agent of the will in performing or in giving. It is sometimes used as representing the whole man. "Whatsoever thy *hand* findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Eccles. ix. 10. To receive a mark in the hand, may therefore be understood to express assistance and encouragement extended to this apostacy, whatever the profession be which is publicly avowed. To lend it a helping hand, is as positive a sign of favour as the idol brand upon the open brow. Confirm it by your approbation, foster it by your sympathy and regard, enrich it with contributions of your substance, and you are in the sight of the omniscient and just God, giving worship to the image of the beast, and bringing upon yourself the awful indignation of him whose truth is reviled, and whose glory is turned into shame.

By the mark in the forehead, then, we understand a professed homage and subjection to anti-christ. By the mark in the hand, a friendly alliance with it, or countenance and aid granted to its objects. Now,

III. Consider the inevitable effects of such conduct. The language of the text is of the most appalling description; and, in its application, it is absolute and without exception. We cannot fail to be struck with

the unqualified nature of this terrific denunciation. It is directed against every one who shall, to the dishonour of Christ and his Father, be guilty of worshipping the beast and his image. Here, then, we venture to submit a few remarks.

This is part of a prophecy which unquestionably relates to the final judgments of God upon this idolatrous Babylon—a prophecy, therefore, which has not yet been fulfilled, though the time of its fearful realization cannot be a great way off. We incline to interpret it as referring to that particular time, yet future, mentioned in the opening of the 18th chapter, when the hour of retribution is at hand—when it shall be said of this Babylon, this Christless church, that she is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird; and when the command will go forth, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

Against two errors we would desire to guard. 1st, We cannot embrace the opinion, that there is, and can be, no salvation to any member of the Popish Church. We believe that Christ has had many hidden ones in that ungodly system in every age that has elapsed. We believe that of the sect of the Jansenists, whose light, though wonderful for their circumstances, was yet insufficient to lead them out of Romanism, there were many eminent examples of faith and piety. Who has not heard of Pascal, whose splendid genius was hallowed by the purest devotion? and of Martin Boos, the curate of Weggensbach, who spent his days within the pale of Rome, but who preached the Gospel with a zeal and fervour never surpassed, and whose apostolic labours were blest to the conversion of thousands? Luther was a Christian before he became a Protestant; and we should hope that the priest Rongé, now the head of a new reformation in the heart of Catholic Germany, had seen and loved the truth ere he publicly arraigned the conduct of the Bishop of Treves, or could have conceived the idea of that confession recently published. 2dly, We feel convinced that the gift of salvation cannot be enjoyed in connection with a love of the system of the Papacy. Those to whom we have referred, and many more besides, were not Romanists in reality, though they never forsook the profession of Rome. They were Christians of no common attainments in a Christless church. They had no part in Babylon; and Babylon, true to her prophetic character, refused to have any part in them. They were disowned, traduced, persecuted. They suffered every species of injustice, every refinement of oppression at the hands of that Church whose outward garb they wore, but from whose corruptions they stood far apart. And if these disciples of Christ saw it not to be their duty to abandon a Church over whose

errors they incessantly wept, and whose fiendish hatred embittered their weary days, the fact is to be attributed to the unfaithfulness of the Protestant churches, whose unholy contentions and visible deadness not only presented no point of attraction, but repelled them as from the worst enemies of that living salvation after which they panted.

We are warranted in saying, that the Popish system is the mystery of iniquity. It is not the way of salvation, but the denial and rejection of it. It is the master device of Satan's subtilty for obstructing the Redeemer's work, and ensnaring the souls of men to their eternal ruin. And they who love it will share its impending desolations. The text is truth. The worshippers of the beast and his image, who carry on them the marks of their impiety, are confederated against the Lamb and the people whom he loves. They are the friends and abettors of idolatry, and will be overwhelmed at last by the consuming fire of his vengeance.

We return now to the words of the text, and, reading them again with fresh attention, we see in a stronger light the sin of all wilful co-operation with Babylon, or league with this bestial power;—the certain fate in the end of every nation that, despising these solemn warnings, shall yet bow down at her shrine. She is preparing for signal destruction. Escape she cannot. Never will she be owned to be the bride and church of Christ. But as idolatry denies his very being as God; insults Divine Majesty to his face; so he will declare his being and manifest the glory of his Majesty in breaking the idol in pieces, and casting its deluded worshippers into a bed of shame. And if this be the sin and punishment of professedly Popish nations, much more will it be the recompense of a people professing the truth as it is in Jesus, and boasting of the liberty with which Christ makes his people free, who yet befriend this system of spiritual falsehood and mental prostration; much more will such a recompense overtake us, if, contemning our light and perverting our privileges, we relapse into the errors of Romanism, or contribute to advance its cause.

Look back for a moment. The Jews of old held such a place among the nations as we have been raised to in modern times. They possessed the covenants of promise, the holy oracles of truth, the name and privileges of the true worshippers of God; and even so do we. They were bound by their own vows and obligations to abhor all manner of idolatry, as alike hateful to God and pernicious to every interest of his people; and even so are we. The worship of idols was the great temptation to which the Israelites were exposed in former ages; and we may believe it assumed a subtle and imposing form when we find Solomon yielding to its influence, and nearly all the monarchs of David's line giving it open countenance and support. But was not this conduct a

sin of deepest enormity in the estimation of God? It was a forsaking of him. It lost them his favour. It involved them in his wrath. They were troubled, afflicted, overcome, exiled, eventually accursed and scattered to the ends of the earth, the objects of God's displeasure, the victims of their own incorrigible unbelief. And mark, they were not allowed to begin or continue such evil courses without many appropriate and startling warnings. God would not let them alone; but admonished, exhorted, and rebuked them by his servants the prophets; yet they would not listen to their instructions; they could not tolerate their sharp reproofs; they would not credit their threatenings. Well were they told of the folly of their conduct, and that the fruit of such unhallowed policy would be disastrous to the nation at large. But they laughed to scorn the messages of God's servants. They had wiser and worthier councillors to guide them; and, in the encouragement they gave to the enemies of Israel's Holy One, they fondly dreamed they would find safety and peace. They would avoid impending danger, they thought, by forming such alliances as these, and expected to receive from the heathen that help and prosperity which God alone could bestow. All these things are recorded in the Bible for our instruction. God is not changed, but the same; and even as he is subjecting his professed worshippers now to similar temptations, so will the result be similar in their experience.

The great apostacy symbolized as Babylon, occupies in the Christian Church the place which the heathen idolatries occupied in the commonwealth of Israel. It is the abomination that maketh desolate. Soften and paint it as you will, still it is mystery—the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. Let it appear, as with us in Scotland, of quiet and inoffensive aspect—a very lamb in seeming gentleness of spirit—or, as in the capital of France, enthusiastic and attractive, adorned with all the charms of popular eloquence, the arts and graces of the highest cultivation—or, as in the gorgeous cathedral of Troves, exhibiting with studied solemnity the garment of our blessed Lord, and the very nails that pierced his hands and feet, to inflame the superstitions of degraded myriads—or, as in Madeira, immuring in a prison every one guilty of reading the Bible, pronouncing it blasphemy to refuse worship to images, and sentencing to death a tender mother who would not believe that the bread of the Supper was a deity, and that the feast of love was a sacrifice for sin. Yes, whatever its external features, still it is essentially the same implacable enemy of the Lamb of God, seeking by force where violence is requisite, or by fraud where deception is the better weapon, to quench the light of Divine truth, and slay the witnesses of the Redeemer. And thus one in its spirit and in its aims—the proud antagonist of God the Saviour—its destiny is set-

fled and inevitable—it cannot be amended, and it will not escape ; but soon, for its time is short, it will be utterly destroyed by the indignation of the Lamb.

One would think that the clear denunciations of Scripture, when coupled with the history of Popery, from its rise to the present hour, would amply suffice to deter Protestants, at least, from favouring such a cruel and blasphemous system ; or anticipating from its friendship any thing but debasement and injury. A good tree alone can produce good fruit. But Popery is like the Upas Tree of Eastern story, which sheds a withering blight around it, and whose poison is so intensely virulent, that to pass under its shadow is to incur immediate death. It is an unmingled curse. If the enemy of the Son of God, it is also the destructive enemy of every interest of the sons of men. Wherever it prevails, it depresses the powers of intellect—scars the sensibilities of conscience—impairs the resources of humanity—and arrests the work of social amelioration and improvement. The long period of its former ascendancy in Europe is fitly spoken of as the dark ages ; for under its absolute sway, when its will was paramount, all energy was paralyzed—the evidences of vigorous life vanished from the face of things—and men seemed sunk into the lowest state of moral and intellectual degradation. Its path has ever been illustrated by the gloom of ignorance, the growth of every species of profaneness—by the decay of prosperity—by the barrenness and desolation even of external nature. No wonder ! It locks up the mind in spiritual fetters—forbids freedom of thought—takes possession of the very feelings of the soul—subjects the whole man to the inimitable despotism of an irresponsible priesthood—and brings the wrath of heaven upon the people. Examine the physical condition of Christendom. You can trace Popery by its mischievous effects, for the beast impresses his mark on the temporal estate as well as on the foreheads of his worshippers. Journey over the continent ; nay, travel through the provinces of Ireland, and, by simply looking from the windows of the coach as you speed along, you can tell unerringly where Popery reigns, and where its power is checked or suspended by the intervention of Protestantism. Everywhere its fruits declare it to be a system of malignant evil. It blasts—it impoverishes—it prostrates—it kills—it carries malediction in its train ; and better far be visited by a scourging pestilence—have our harvests prevented by untimely storms—and our coasts strewn with the wreck of our extensive commerce—better endure such calamity than have Popery erected in the land—in itself a judgment comprehensive of every national misfortune. Yet this is the power which our rulers are seeking to propitiate by a sacrifice of the principles of their own professed belief. This is the system which our statesmen, in the

persecute of their difficulties, deem it a master stroke of policy to smile upon and promote. The fact is portentous, and forcibly brings to mind the threatenings of God to a perseveringly impenitent people, that he would choose their delusions, and give them up to believe a lie. But, by the result, it will be found in this case, as in that of Israel, that alliance with God's enemy is to make him our enemy; that to give our substance to nourish the hopes of antichrist, is to mix for ourselves a cup of judicial suffering and woe.

IV. Let us now advert to the present state and prospects of Romanism.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was the most glorious deliverance from spiritual thralldom that the world had seen from the times of our Saviour. It was, indeed, a day-spring from on high, fraught with blessings equally to the civil and religious interests of mankind. It brought freedom to the conscience—light to the understanding—grace to renew the heart—liberty to exercise the faculties of the mind—and a boundless store of precious truths on which to exercise them. It brought down to earth the kingdom of heaven to elevate and adorn the dwellings of men, and discovered to all in the character and will of God the object of desire and the unchangeable rule of duty. For a time, the power of Rome tottered to its fall, and high were the hopes entertained that it would disappear before the progress of rational enquiry, and the preaching of the unmutated Gospel. But the work of Reformation was imperfectly carried on in most nations, and in course of time it was arrested in all. Soon, alas! the tide of success began to turn, first in England—then in Germany—and last of all in Scotland. The grand truths of Protestantism became obscured by a growth of errors, and the rapid diffusion of a lukewarm spirit in the churches. In the course of the last century, the distinctive features of the Reformation were almost entirely obliterated from the practice at least of almost every branch of the reformed churches. They were smitten with a dead palsy. Infidelity crept into their bosom. In Geneva, the cradle of Presbytery, the church of Calvin and Beza was occupied by frigid Socinianism. In Germany, a heartless rationalism effaced the very remembrance of vital Christianity. In England, so low was the cause of evangelical truth, that when the late Romaine, about the middle of last century, instituted a weekly prayer meeting to pray for evangelical ministers of the Church of England by name, no more than six could be heard of in the whole of that immense hierarchy. In Scotland, the policy of the world, under the name of Moderatism, was triumphant in the Establishment, and be-

yond its pale, a recent and divided secession was doing a little to keep godliness alive. What a state of things in the Churches, and yet no fears were entertained of danger! All was well; such was the feeling! The enemy had been defeated! It was an age of light! Science was unfolding her wonders, arts were flourishing, discovery was opening up new channels of thoughts—new worlds of observation! Old errors in religion, like exploded errors in astronomy, could never return! It were a libel on the reason of the age to suppose so! No risk of Popery reviving in a generation so far advanced in knowledge! The falsehoods of Rome had no chance of success in such a time of light as had occurred! Well; for a length of time, things remained stationary or dead. Europe was desolated with bloody wars. The shock of the French Revolution, the march of Napoleon's armies, the terrific shouts of battle, filled the public ear for many a day, and allowed neither room nor inclination for ecclesiastical movements. But all this while preparation was making for the re-ascension of Popery, to all the influence of which the Reformation had deprived it. Infidelity was eradicating the knowledge and love of the truth out of the popular heart—it was producing a universal indifference to all spiritual considerations—it was leavening the minds of the young and ardent with a distaste for the doctrines of the Gospel, and widely diffusing a contempt for the principles and the very names of the great Reformers.

We read of the mystery of iniquity, that its coming is after the working of Satan, with lying wonders and with all deceivableness "of unrighteousness." This is the character of the process by which it insinuates itself into the confidence of men, and rivets its chains of darkness around the neck of its victims.

From the termination of the last general war, the Papacy had leisure to survey the vast field of enterprise that stretched around it—to ponder its situation—to mature its schemes—to calculate every contingency—and to adapt its plans and efforts to the peculiar circumstances of the time. Mark, its great foe, evangelical churches, had perished, or all but perished, in the lapse of one century. It had no longer to contend with *truth*—Christ's truth—preached by faithful ministers—and confessed by an intelligent people. Its principal antagonist, for a time, was infidelity—an infidelity which deeply infected the literature, more especially the popular literature of the age, making it the fashion of educated minds to scoff at the humbling truths of the Gospel, while it inordinately magnified the importance of mere intellectual light, or the cultivation and expansion of the mental faculties. This theory of sceptical philosophers soon became the sentiment of governments, and the watch-word of an unprincipled liberalism, to which the mass of the people fell

an easy prey, no longer guided by the wisdom of the Bible, nor warned of specious errors by a vigilant and devoted ministry. The conclave of St Peter's were among the first to appreciate this system of education without the doctrines of revelation. They soon perceived that such a system of instruction afforded no guarantee to Protestantism, and that it might be employed with the greatest ease to forward their own projects of Papal aggrandizement. They understood that instruction addressed to the intellect alone, and freed from all intermixture of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, would consist with their views as well at least as with those of evangelism—that it would answer the purpose of the atheist, the Socinian, the anarchist, the Romanist, as well as the higher ends of God's enlightened servants. So, with quick resolution and admirable sagacity, they resolved to regain their power over the world of mind by means of *education*. They saw the error of politicians, and instantly took advantage of it. No doubt, in many lands, they refuse even the slightest modicum of education to the miserable populace. Upon the whole, they would prefer them uninstructed. But they will have England and France as well as Italy and Spain. The world is their field of operation, and so, accommodating their system to every emergency, they have boldly entered the lists as educationists, and in all continental Europe they are bearing away the prize as the ablest and most efficient instructors.

In the beginning of 1838, I was much struck with a passage in an important article that then appeared in one of the leading periodicals of London, on the celebrated affair of the Archbishop of Cologne. It is as follows:—

“A distinguished foreign Protestant Ecclesiastic, eminent in piety, talents, and acquirements, passed a year in Rome not long since, under circumstances highly favourable for observing the conduct of its court. The opinion which he reluctantly formed was, that such are the means, the craft, the skill, the zeal, and the industry which it employs against the Protestants, ignorant or careless of its devices as they are, lukewarm, divided into sects, and disunited, that it ultimately must or will prevail over its adversaries. He found the high clergy at Rome thus animated, and not labouring under the disadvantages of unconcealed immoralities and of infidelity, under which they laboured in the time of Leo X.”

We need hardly say, that in Belgium, in all the countries of Germany, in Switzerland, with little or no exception, Romanism is at this moment nearly as paramount and influential as it was at the time of Luther. It has almost retrieved its loss, and is buoyant and sanguine in the confidence of speedily attaining its original supremacy. Was it not a striking proof of its progress, that to conciliate this formidable power, the

King of Prussia, a Protestant, consented to appear as chief actor in laying the foundation-stone of the Popish cathedral at Cologne? And the strife about the Jesuits is a corroboration of the same fact. The Jesuits are invading nations as schoolmasters. They present themselves as efficient teachers of the young; and, excluding religion, they are well qualified for the task; far superior, in general, to their Protestant rivals. But, observe; the Jesuits have come in the wake of Popery; they solicit and demand the schools only where the Papacy has established its authority as a Church. And we see, that some Romanists are the most determined enemies of the Jesuits, who, ardent for proselytes, push matters with imprudent haste; and by seeking to grasp at every thing at once, endanger the loss of what is already possessed. Do not suppose that the defeat of the Jesuits, either in Switzerland or in Paris, is a sign that Popery is weak; for, if defeated, it will be by the advice of the Papacy. And defeat will pave the way for a more extensive and menacing encroachment. How stands the fact? In Belgium, the education is universally in the hands of the priesthood. In France, there are 44,000 common schools, or, in our language, parish schools. The religion of the Bible is never taught in these seminaries; but in 1831, it having been discovered that many of the teachers were the emissaries of Rome, they were driven out by the indignation of the people. Now, in 1845, about 40,000 of these schools are taught by the agents of the priesthood, and the people are quiescent, if not satisfied. It is contrary to the civil constitution of France, that Jesuits should exist in the country. But though their existence is contrary to law, they have taken complete possession, laugh at the puny efforts of their enemies to dislodge them, are backed by the vast majority of the bishops, are now contesting with the government itself for the undivided control of the university of Paris, and will, in a short space of time, accomplish their object of engrossing the whole education of that priest-ridden empire. Let us cross the Atlantic. In Lower Canada, they have organised a system of education which is absolutely triumphant. There the seminary priests are at this day the chosen instructors of the great proportion of the young men of the better classes of society, while the sisters of charity are the accomplished teachers of the females. You will all have heard of the gigantic efforts the Romanists are making to spread their system among the excitable and busy population of the United States. Their art is profound and extraordinary. They first advocate with all their might the exclusion of the Bible from the common schools. They cast their whole weight into the scale of godless liberalism, that cries for education apart from religion. And this conduct of theirs was the cause of the lamentable

disturbances which but recently occurred in Pennsylvania. But when they have succeeded in reducing the national schools to a mere barren, lifeless, heartless system of intellectual exercise, from which all soul and spirit are banished—when they have succeeded to a wish—what then do they contrive? Do they support these common schools? Nay; they have rendered them utterly distasteful to the best portion of the Protestant community, and so they dexterously provide a remedy. Take an example. “St Louis will one day be the mistress of western America. Situated on the banks of the Mississippi, it already numbers 32,000 souls. The most energetic of the agents of Rome have chosen it as a centre of operations. Rome presents her church in St Louis most gracefully to the whole community. The Jesuits have erected a spacious hospital for the sick, and its nurses are the famed *Sisters of Charity*. There is a convent of Nuns of the Sacred Heart, twenty-eight in number, but their convent is just a large seminary for the education of the young ladies of the Missouri; and a new order of nuns is daily expected, whose object is also that of educationists. The Jesuits have seized, with equal success, on the education of the future statesmen and legislators of the country, by a large college, having six professors and ten tutors. It has already a museum, and a library of 9000 volumes. In addition to these institutions, they have begun popular schools, in which they give gratuitous instruction to above 800 boys and girls. Their schools have a larger attendance than all the common schools of the city, so excellent is their organisation, and so extensive their influence. Their aim is to destroy the common school system altogether, or so to disgust Protestants with it as to make it comparatively useless. The press is so thoroughly in bondage, that, instead of checking these efforts, it seconds them. And the Jesuits, having laid these plans to secure the rising generation, are in good earnest providing also for the adults, erecting not less than five in addition to four churches already open. Any thing more remarkable for wisdom, energy, and untiring zeal, I have never heard of.”*

From this glimpse of the New World, let us return to the Old. France may be regarded as the heart of the Papacy at present, and the moving power of the civilised nations. The Papacy appreciates this fact, and employs the energies of France as the right arm of its policy. In 1822 a missionary society was established in the city of Lyons for the propagation of the faith; that year its income was £600; in 1837 its revenue was £39,000; last year it amounted to no less a sum than £140,000 sterling. It publishes its *Missionary Record*, just as we do. Last year it circulated

* Impressions of America, &c. By Rev. G. Lewis.

162,000 copies; and we are informed by a competent judge, that this magazine contains letters from bishops and missionaries from every quarter of the globe—that, in point of talent, information, and every quality fitted to interest the public mind, it is decidedly superior to the correspondence found in our missionary periodicals—that it is read with intense avidity, especially by young ecclesiastics, who burn with enthusiasm in the cause of their magnificent and far-reaching Church, and exultingly anticipate her early accession to the throne of universal mind. We think we have done great things when we send forth to the heathen some five or six devoted missionaries. Last year, this one society in Lyons sent abroad 130 missionaries. They compass sea and land. They rush in at every opening. No sooner is Africa in possession of French troops, than it is occupied by a band of Popish priests. No sooner does Britain burst open the gates of China, than they embrace the opportunity, and plant their missionaries at every station. In one year, they sent forty missionaries to China. At this moment, they have several establishments in Hong Kong, while the Protestants are scarcely heard of. In Egypt, they have a College in the city of Alexandria. They have missions and schools at Smyrna, Ephesus, Aleppo, Antioch, Damascus. In the East Indies, they are working with like determined energy. The city of Agra, in Upper India, is now, we are told, a Romish city; the resident Protestant Englishmen and Scotchmen crowd to hear the eloquent preaching of the bishop and his assistants. Note the universality of their design! In Polynesia, the sweet isles of the Pacific, there was no representative of Rome in 1820. Now there are at least three vicars apostolic, one archbishop, and fifty priests; and we know the sad story of Tahiti. Australia, a British colony, had no priest in 1820. Now it has two bishops, fifty-six priests, and thirty-one schools. The Romanists know their power—they feel the certainty of success. Their purpose, their heart is one. No distraction or variance prevails amongst them. Bishops and priests, the artful Jesuit, the graceful sister of charity, have no spouse but Rome—no personal interest to engross them. Fired with one glowing passion for the glory of their Church, they spare no exertions, grudge no sacrifice, to forward her grand objects—reduce the souls of mankind to worship the image of the beast. We know that, like a rising party, they are full of a boastful courage, and animated with the brightest visions of universal supremacy. To them the crown of empire seems glittering in the distance, and a few years more, they devoutly believe, will place this precious diadem on the head of the sovereign pontiff.

And what is there in the domain of Christendom to prevent so woeful a consummation? Alas! when we survey the condition of the Protestant

Churches, we see little to comfort, but much to alarm us. There is little to be seen but jealousies, rivalries, and miserable confusion. Instead of steadfastness in the faith, an increasing disorder fed by a growing appetite for change. Instead of humility, watchfulness, and self-denial, a restless ambition for greatness in the sight of men, little of the wisdom of the reformers, less of the mind that was in Christ. When we look to the so-called Protestant Church of England, it seems already in the embraces of superstition; no longer the vaunted bulwark of the Protestant faith, but a fresh auxiliary to the shouting armies of blood-stained Babylon. When we look to the legislature, in the hope of finding there the genius of British freedom watching over the purity of religion, as the palladium of our liberties, we find either an astonishing ignorance, or a frightful hostility; either a gross indifference to the claims of Divine truth, or an avowed partiality for the interests of deadly error. The danger grows upon the mind, as we consider our position, and become aware that our friends are few, and our securities rotten to the core. Evident it is, however, that a sense of danger is being felt by all denominations of evangelical Christians, and, as if awaking from a dream, they are beginning to inquire of one another what is to be done. This is a hopeful symptom, though a small one. News comes to us, too, from central Europe, that light is breaking forth amidst their moral darkness. There is a glorious movement in France, and a corresponding revival in Germany. God is at work as well as the man of sin. The Spirit has revisited these long-silent regions, and its voice is being heard, and witnesses are raised up to plead for that Saviour whose gracious work is so fearfully traduced. These are cheering indications of the presence and majesty of him who is King of Zion, and by whose mighty power the adversary will at last be hurled from his pre-eminence, and plunged into the abyss of hell. Oh! are not heaven and earth filled with signs of approaching conflict and judgment? From every land, from every quarter, there are omens of a change that will try the hearts of the saints, and confound the wisdom of the world. And is it not a sign as ominous as any, that at this time, instead of vindicating the principles of her constitution, and shielding by her strength the cause of God when suffering wrong, Protestant Britain should have proposed to incorporate Popery with herself, and provide for the propagation of her idolatry, as if it were precious as God's word, and desirable as his blessing? It is a device that will fail as certainly as it is entertained. The Word of God from our mouth is as true as when spoken by Jeremiah in ancient times. "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed." Jerem. xvii. 13. "Because my people have forgotten me, and have burned incense to vanity, and have stumbled in their ways from the

ancient paths, I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will shew them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity." Jerem. xviii. 15.

We well know, that vain will be our endeavours to turn our statesmen from their infatuated project. But there is a duty we owe to our country, and there is another that is due to ourselves. If I am silent while this mystery of iniquity is recognised and established as a national institution, I share in the guilt that is contracted, and may expect to participate of the plagues that will be poured out. Or again, if I am willing to contribute of the substance I have received of the Lord, to contribute the least fractional part of it to support the beast and his image—to teach the falsehoods of antichrist—then am I the ally of the beast and of antichrist in his war with the Lamb of God, and giving my assistance to diffuse the mortal poison of his errors, to beguile and ruin immortal souls. I may do neither of these things with a safe conscience. And therefore, to exonerate ourselves before the righteous governor of the nations, to stand clear of the sin of this unhappy transaction, it becomes us to lift up our voice of solemn protestation, to declare that we connive not at the reckless iniquity—that we approve not such counsels, nor countenance such policy. And that, however, we may be frowned upon by the plotting politician, whose creed rises no higher than the expediency of the passing hour; and by the proud-hearted infidel, who scoffs at the idea of the Saviour, and the mention of a judgment-seat; and by the spiritually blind, to whom nothing is real or important that does not strike upon his carnal sense; or by the secret well-wisher of Popery, who would gladly see the cause of evangelism, which he hates, supplanted by the pomps and ceremonies of a shewy ritual—we believe the testimony of the Bible, we fear God and stand in awe of his holiness; we love the truth, and cling to the promises of Jesus; we are persuaded that Providence will by and bye confirm the voice of the Word, and shew, by manifest proofs, that the foolishness of God is wiser than men—that he is not mocked—that the woe pronounced on Babylon will be realized—and that all who give her worship or wear her mark, shall *drink of the wine of His wrath poured without mixture into the cup of His indignation.* Amen.

SERMON LXIV.

THE APPLICATION OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

BY THE REV. FRANCIS GILLIES, RATTRAY.

"And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."—Jsa. xxxiii. 40.

WE learn from the Bible that there are only two great Covenants on the part of God, relative to the everlasting state and happiness of man. The first of these is, the Covenant of Works, made with Adam as the covenant head, and all mankind in him. This, having been broken by Adam's fall, is the fruitful source of nothing but guilt, depravity, and misery, temporal and eternal, to the whole human race. The second is, the Covenant of Grace made with Christ, as the Covenant Head, and all his elect and spiritual seed in him, and is to them the blessed fountain of spiritual and eternal life, holiness, and happiness. Now it is to the *latter* that this precious text refers; and we are to consider it not merely as a revelation or description of that Covenant of Grace, but chiefly as containing a promise on the part of God, regarding the application of it to his people. Jehovah here binds himself to see that each and all of his people shall be brought to enjoy its blessings. It is in this sense that we are to understand God, when he here says, "I will make a covenant *with them*." Correctly speaking, the Covenant of Grace is made with Christ as the Surety and Covenant Head of the elect; and the only sense in which it is here promised to be made *with them*, is in the way of their being united to Christ, and so brought within the bond of the Covenant, and put in possession of all its rich blessings. This God here promises to secure. He engages not only that there shall be a covenant fulfilled in Christ, but also that it shall be applied to all his chosen people. Oh how desirable, my dear friends, must it be that this Covenant should be realized and fulfilled to our souls! The whole of our happiness here and hereafter depends upon what God is to us. If, in Christ and according to this Covenant, he be our God and portion, we must be supremely blessed; but if not, we are eternally ruined. You may remember that, when David was dying, he realized and enjoyed his interest in this

Covenant, and so could die happy and triumphant: "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: this is all my salvation, and all my desire." (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) Oh! when we come to die, may the Lord put the same dying song into our hearts, and may life be breathed away in its sweet accents as we fall asleep in Jesus' bosom! Let us now a little more closely consider the description of this Covenant, as given by God himself in this instructive text; and while we are musing, may the Spirit make us all to accept and enjoy it as in Christ, that we may go away true and spiritual covenanters with God. May God save us from the heinous sin and great self-injury of once more hearing its gracious offers, and yet, after all, practically spurning them away as worthless. Observe, then, from the text, concerning this Covenant—that

I. *It is all of grace.* Hence, it is called pre-eminently "the Covenant of Grace." Its grand end and great design seems to be, to glorify all God's attributes, indeed, but especially to manifest "the exceeding riches of his grace." There was grace, indeed, in making even the Covenant of Works with Adam. How kind it was in God to promise to give to him and his seed eternal life and glory, on terms, too, so easy in themselves, and previously binding upon him as God's creature, and independent of such a gracious promise. But grace reigns more gloriously here. Dwell upon the following ideas, and you will be persuaded of this.

What grace was it on the part of God for him to enter into a new, and that in many respects a better covenant, and with those very parties (or at least on their behalf) who had but immediately before broken his previous covenant, and who, at the very moment, were "rebels," "enemies," yea even "haters of God." Remember that God was under no necessity of making such a covenant. Man, as fallen, guilty, and depraved, deserved to perish, and might most justly have been left in the destruction into which his sins had brought him. He could have no claim upon God for a second covenant, merely because he had ruined himself by his breach of the first. God is indeed merciful and gracious, but he is not thereby laid under any necessity to show his goodness in the way of saving sinners of the human race, any more than he was obliged to save the angels who fell. Grace and mercy are, and must be, absolutely free, and spontaneous, and self-moved. God, too, is infinitely independent of all his creatures—self-sufficient, yea, self-satisfied. Though all sinners had been left to perish, his happiness and glory would not have been thereby diminished. Nothing then but his own rich sovereign grace prompted him to enter into this Covenant.

Again, God is the party contracting in the Covenant for *both sides*. God the Father engages for the Godhead ; and God the Son, as the God-man Mediator, engages for sinners. Moreover, it is an absolute Covenant of the richest and the *freest* promises ; for, so far as we sinners are personally concerned, there are no meritorious conditions or prerequisite qualifications. Our utter worthlessness and weakness are the only things previously considered—that we are thoroughly ruined by sin in Adam, and so need to be redeemed. All the proper meritorious conditions are fulfilled in and by Christ, as given by the Father, and his own gracious consent, just to fulfil these conditions in the name of his people. His infinitely meritorious doing and dying—his vicarious serving and suffering in the room, or stead of his people, these are the sole proper conditions of the Covenant, and they were entirely performed by him. To us sinners, it is as free and absolute a Covenant as was the covenant of the seasons made with Noah, when “the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake, *for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth* ; while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” (Gen. viii. 21.) Here God’s grace pre-supposes and proceeds upon nothing but man’s wickedness, and nothing else *about man* is previously contemplated in this Covenant of Grace. Look at it as given in the text. It is nothing but a cluster of free gracious promises. Or look at it as described in the New Testament edition of it, as given in Hebrews viii. 10, 12, “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel : I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people ; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more ;” and still it is nothing but rich and free promises to us. Now, free promises are just the utterings—the outgoings of free grace.

And, lastly, if you consider the character of those persons to whom the Covenant is fulfilled, that they are not only all heinous sinners, but that, very often, they are the oldest and the vilest sinners that burden and pollute God’s earth, who are brought to enjoy it ; you will see another proof, that it must be a covenant of the freest grace, since it embraces such hell-deserving sinners. “It begins at Jerusalem.” “The publicans and harlots are brought into the kingdom,” while, generally, “the scribes and Pharisees,” the decent, moral, respectable men and women, are left out. “Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.”

Now, combine all these ideas, and Oh, how clearly and strongly do they prove that this Covenant is all of the richest grace, in so far as sinners are concerned ! Blessed be God that it is so ! For whereon can sinners

hope, except on the free sovereign grace of the God of all grace, as revealed in this Covenant of Grace.

II. *It is very kind and beneficent.* It is all about doing us good, especially by making us good, holy, and happy. Coming from God, the infinitely good One, "the author of every good and perfect gift," it is just one great promise of ceaseless and unmixed love to us. There is not a whisper of the punishment we deserve as sinners—not a word of the curse—not a drop of wrath. Nothing shall be given or done that is not really and entirely good; not what we fondly imagine would be good in our ignorance, and to our own injury, but what is good in the sight of God, who knows infallibly what is so, and who makes every thing to be to us what it proves to be, whether good or evil. It is just a constellation of blessings.

Observe, too, their *certainly*. Nothing will provoke God to turn away from thus doing them constant good. No, he will not turn his smiling face from them, or cover it over with a frown in wrath! Far less will he go away entirely, or stay away perpetually, leaving them to their own emptiness and wretchedness. "He will not leave them nor forsake"—"He hateth putting away"—"Whom he loves, he loves to the end." Whom he blesses, he blesses completely. His "eyes shall be always on them for good." His heart is always love, and his hand shall constantly do them good; and even with regard to afflictions and temptations, they shall be enabled to say, "It was good for us that we were afflicted." Yea, sanctified afflictions are amongst the greatest of God's blessings, and the richest jewels in a believer's portion in this state of discipline. Ah, dear Christian friends! how much we do daily to provoke God to turn away from doing us good! How very ungrateful are we for all his mercies! How sinful in the enjoyment of them! How forgetful of the bounteous Giver! Yea, how often we pervert and abuse his good gifts into occasions and instruments of dishonour to him and injury to ourselves! Still, he will not turn away! Oh! the persevering and ceaseless goodness of our God!

You will observe that there is no limitation upon the good here promised, and why should we restrict? We must view it in its universal comprehensiveness. It includes *all* good—good temporal, spiritual, and eternal—good for the body, the mind, and the soul—all true happiness in time, at death, and through eternity—grace and glory—all the good that God can bestow, or that we can receive. It includes death to the curse, the broken Covenant, the reign of sin, the love of the world, the tyranny of the Devil; and an endless and glorified life—from a reconciled God as the cause of it—upon a gracious God as the upholding support—with God as a soul-satisfying portion, and

to God as its last and highest end. It includes good in three distinct periods of time. Good before our conversion—to bring us into being—to preserve us alive notwithstanding all dangers—to prevent our committing the unpardonable sin, or in any other way putting a tombstone upon our souls, and sealing them over under the curse—and to bring about an effectual calling at the appointed time. Good after conversion and union to Christ, comprehending all the blessings of grace. And glory in eternity. In the first period, eternal life is only coming certainly towards them, and as yet they have no personal title to or enjoyment of it; during the second period, they have the title, and a begun but still an imperfect enjoyment; and during the last period they have both the perfect title and the perfect enjoyment, and that for ever, too! Oh! how great is the goodness which the Lord hath laid up for his people! God will not turn away from doing them all this good; yea, as he more strongly expresses it in the verse after the text, “I will rejoice over them to do them good, with my whole heart and with my whole soul!” Oh that we were as willing to receive as God is willing to bestow all this good! Let us not turn away from the good God who is waiting to be gracious, and to heap all this good upon our souls. Let us not “receive the grace of God in vain,” and “forsake our own mercies.” Oh, thou infinitely gracious God, open thou thine heart and thy hand to pour out this tide of blessedness! and Oh, also, open thou our hearts to receive it, that we may be filled with the fulness of God!

III. *It is very full and comprehensive.* The three following ideas will illustrate its amplitude and completeness. First, you will observe that it not only provides for all on the part of God, but that it also secures everything on the part of the sinner with relation to his enjoyment of it, which, strictly speaking, is all that he has to do with it. Hence, it is so suitable to our helpless spiritual condition, who, of ourselves, could do nothing but just sin on, and so deserve fresh wrath, and the upbreking of the Covenant, if that were possible. God engages to see to it that we shall not depart from him which would just be equivalent to our losing the enjoyment of this Covenant. He will not allow us to depart from him or from it, totally and finally; and any occasional backsliding will most wonderfully and graciously be, not only repaired, but also overruled for our good. He will not turn away from us or from our good; yea, and he will put his fear into our hearts to keep and secure us, and so we shall be “kept by the mighty power of God unto complete salvation.” In this respect this Covenant differs most essentially from the Covenant of Works, in which God did not engage for man’s performance of his part, or secure his enjoyment of its blessings. Man in it was left to the freedom of his

own will, and, abusing it through the temptation of the Devil, he fell, and thereby broke the Covenant, and entailed its curse upon himself and all his posterity. But here our help is laid upon one that is mighty and infallible. "Our life is hid with Christ in God"—bound up in the God-man Mediator; and unless *he* can fail (which is impossible), we cannot fail of the enjoyment of the covenant which is "in him yea and amen to the glory of God."

Again, dear friends, you will notice that God here provides for the making of this covenant with each and all of his people in the way of their being brought to close with it. The application of it is as much God's work and promise as is the decreeing of it or the fulfilling of its conditions. "*I will make,*" and who will or can prevent him? Neither the Devil, nor guilt, nor their own wicked and unbelieving hearts shall. If their acceptance of it were left unsecured, or to the choice of their own desperately wicked hearts, it would never be realized. But God who knoweth this, and whose work is perfect, and who never leaves any deficiency in his engagements, or any emergency unprovided for, here engages to secure its application to, and its enjoyment by, all for whom it is designed. "*I will make it*"—and who shall unmake it? I will make it with *them*, and not one of them shall be overlooked. Christ is appointed trustee and executor of his own testament, and "head over all things to the church," just that he might "give eternal life to as many as the Father gave him," and allow not one of his sheep to perish; and he will faithfully and omnipotently execute his commission.

But, once more, you will observe that the line of this covenant runs through all time. Beginning in the past eternity, (for the covenant was made between the Divine and eternal parties from all eternity, though not fulfilled till the fulness of time,) it extends through time—reaches across death, and stretches away into, and indeed runs parallel with, the eternity that is to come. It is from everlasting to everlasting, like its parties—as endless as the soul of the sinner on which its blessings are to be bestowed. How ample then—how all-comprehensive is God's covenant! There is no redundancy, but there is no deficiency. Unlike the puny, stinted, narrow covenants of man, shrivelled like their pigmy contriver, this is God-like as its maker. High as heaven—endless as eternity—vast as man's capacity, the subject of it—yea, infinite as God, the object of it; for "*I will be to you a God*"—infinitely and eternally—is the substance, the crown and the glory of this covenant. "*As for God, his work is perfect*"—complete for its end—and the end of this covenant is His glory and the complete and endless good of his people, in body and soul. O, dear friends, not only wonder at this magnificent covenant, but, Oh, clasp it with the hand of faith, and by that one grasp lay hold upon infinite and eternal good for yourselves.

Are you doing it? Lord, work in us so to will and to do. Let it be amen to our souls.

IV. *It is personal and particular.* Is is made or fulfilled with each and all of God's people individually and separately, and not merely with the whole Church as a corporate body. Like real religion (which is just its experimental enjoyment), it is very personal, coming home to each man's bosom as if there were not another participator. Mere formalists love only vague generalities and impersonal abstractions, but truly awakened and earnest souls can be satisfied with nothing but close personal application and individual appropriation. The Lord hath made "*with me*" an everlasting covenant, is what they all desire to be able to say like dying David.

The persons with whom it is actually made, are not all men without exception. We could not say so consistently, either with God's Word or God's providence. Confessedly, it is not fulfilled; yea, it is not even revealed and offered actually to all men. The countless heathen never so much as hear of its existence or offer. It includes then only all God's elect people—all those given to Christ as Mediator by the Father, and accepted by him as such—all Christ's mystical members—his spiritual seed—God's true spiritual Israel. God and Christ as Mediator know them all infallibly and irrespective of evidences. Their choice and foreknowledge constitute them the elect. They are all so known to them as that the covenant shall be fulfilled to each particularly, and to all universally, and to none else. Their names are all enrolled in the Book of Life, and engraven on Jesus' breastplate. They are constantly in his eye, and in his breast, and so they are in his prayers, and in his working, and in his dying. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," directly and unerringly. We again can ascertain them only in so far as we can see this covenant fulfilled to them, enjoyed by them, and exemplified (extracted as it were) in their lives. But when we see the Lord thus doing good to any soul, and putting his fear into any heart, then and there we see God's seal and mark, and behold his election realized in their sanctification. If you say that this Covenant is made or designed for all men without exception, then you must either hold universal salvation in virtue of its universal execution, or you must hold it to be useless, and unsuccessful, and falsified in whatever degree it falls short of universal salvation. All men are confessedly not saved—so either it is not made or designed for all men, or it fails in the greater number of cases. Say not that that failure is owing to the unbelief of men. Why God in his providence does not even give his gospel to all men to be a ground of faith to them. And then observe that this Covenant as much pledges God to secure the application of the

covenant to all for whom it was designed in the way of their being actually brought to lay hold of it by positive faith, as that it should be accomplished by his own Son. Faith is one of those good things which God here covenants to *do* in them. To hold a covenant general or universal in its design, but limited and partial in its application and enjoyment, is to unsettle its certainty, and to destroy its consolation, in so far as particular souls are concerned. If it be designed for Judas as much as for Peter, and yet prove completely abortive to Judas—no matter for what reason—it can never rationally prove a ground of security and consolation to Peter till *the end come, and the result be fixed and known*; and so it is comparatively of little use and comfort to him during the whole time of trial, when he most needs its security and consolation. And then, by straining it, in order to give a plausible appearance of universal consolation to all men, you unsettle it, and make it a felt security and an enjoyed comfort to none. No; God's covenant is more consistent with his workings, and more conducive to his people's consolation. He completely and infallibly provides *all* good for them, leaving the rest most justly to reap nothing but the deserved fruit of their own sinfulness. Glory be to a gracious God that he does so provide for any—yea, for so many—for, in the aggregate, they are a multitude that no man can number; and let us not find fault with God's sovereignty that it has not embraced all—all men and all devils. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." *Good* observe; and if we only could see as God sees, it would seem *good* to us too. Meanwhile, let us humbly own, and rest submissively acknowledging God's sovereignty in this matter, and, in the scriptural sense, seek to make our calling and election sure, instead of straining God's covenant beyond his decree, and also beyond his execution of it, and so unsettling and evacuating the whole security and consolation of that covenant which is well-ordered and sure, and is all our salvation and desire even in death.

V. *It is very holy.* God, the maker of it, is holy in all his works, and peculiarly so here in this, the glory of them all. Hence, we find Zecharias calling it, in Luke i. 72, "God's holy covenant." Two observations will shew its sanctity. First, it preserves unsullied, yea it peculiarly displays the righteousness and holiness of God's character and government in at all saving sinners, only through the infinite and vicarious sufferings, death, and obedience of the God-man Mediator, in their room, and on their behalf. Man, in his self-devised schemes of salvation, always immeasurably lowers the righteousness, and stains the holiness, of God's supposed conduct. He would make God not infinitely holy and just,

but only infinitely merciful. But *here* God glorifies and displays not only his infinite grace, but also his infinite holiness and justice. He is "the just God, and yet the Saviour;" "just, and yet the justifier of all who believe." "He is faithful and just, as well as merciful in forgiving sins."

Again, it is also very holy, because it secures the personal holiness of all who are brought into the covenant. God here engages to do them good, and especially in the way of making them really and spiritually good. He here promises to put his fear, that is, all gracious principles and all right dispositions, into them—thus securing that they shall not forsake him or his holy ways. It gives to each a twofold righteousness, corresponding to the twofold unrighteousness he inherited from Adam—the imputed righteousness of Christ for justification, and the inwrought righteousness of the Spirit for sanctification of heart and life; and it never gives the one without the other.

Now, dear friends, it is just the consideration of this, the holiness of the covenant, that gives such confidence and delight to believers in laying hold of, and resting upon, this covenant. It secures glory to God in the highest, as well as peace and (spiritual) good to them. They could not bear the idea that a stain, or even the semblance of a spot, should be cast on God's immaculate holiness. They also delight as heartily in those clauses of the covenant charter which secure their personal holiness as they rejoice in those that seal their pardon, peace, and acceptance. The holiness of the covenant is the very beauty and glory of it to their hearts, though it be the very fault and dread of it in the eyes of the ungodly. They give thanks at the remembrance of its holiness. Oh how glad they are to see that God has taken far more effectual care to secure their holiness than if he had merely made it the condition of the covenant to them! Man would make holiness the condition of entering into the covenant, leaving it to man to realize that condition as he best could. But God, knowing that the free will and inherent power of a not only mutable, but of a fallen and depraved, creature, would never do anything but just sin on—hate holiness, and flee from it—he has guaranteed and provided for it in the covenant, and made it the grand and ultimate end of the covenant, in so far as man is concerned. He has not only commanded us to be holy, but he has "chosen us that we should be holy," and pledged himself in the covenant to make his people holy. Observe, he promises to put his fear—*where*?—not merely into the Bibles, or heads, or even lips of his people, but into their very hearts, and thence into their lives, so that they shall be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He not only commands holiness in his Law, teaches it in his Bible, urges it upon us by his moral suasion and outward ordinances, but he secures it

in his covenant, and actually works it in his people by positively *putting* his fear into their hearts. The heart of God, which loves holiness infinitely, has so ordered his covenant as to secure their holiness unerringly, and it will keep his almighty arm working to begin, carry on, and perfect the holiness of his people according to its tenor. This suggests a very solemn and searching question. Have we that holiness which is just the characteristic mark, because it is one of the principal blessings, of this covenant? And oh! dear friends, how solemn, but how true is it, that it is just in proportion as we are made holy that we have any scriptural proof that we are interested in the covenant! Holy Spirit, be pleased to work deep and extensive holiness in our hearts, and so, by thine own holy work in us, make it evident, in thine own light, that thou hast installed our souls in thy holy covenant!

VI. *It is everlasting.* It would be comparatively valueless, if it could ever end. O how tantalizing it would be to be stripped of the enjoyment of its blessings after we had enjoyed them for a period, and so had just come to know their incalculable value! Deprivation of such blessedness would be torture, exquisite just in proportion as we had tasted its sweetness. The reminiscence and the contrast would then make the loss all the more agonizing. But it is "everlasting"—"a covenant of salt"—which can never fail, or change, or intermit, or end. It must be so; for you will remember that the condition of the covenant has been already performed by Christ, and accepted by the Father. Now, God will not—indeed, he cannot—alter or reverse what has been already done, for that is an impossibility. Moreover, the condition being the infinitely perfect, unchangeable, and everlasting righteousness of Jesus, the covenant founded thereon must be absolutely unalterable and eternal. The very holiness, justice, and truth of God, are all pledged to Christ to secure its permanency and everlasting continuance. The Father cannot be unfaithful or unkind to his Son, whom he so loves, and who has been so faithful to his engagements. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah liv. 10.); and the interest of God's people in this covenant, when once actually bestowed, can never be reversed or abated. "God's gifts and callings are without repentance," and the covenant itself guarantees the perpetuity of their enjoyment of it. But Oh, how very different it would have been—what fickleness itself—had its continuance depended on our works or merits, or even upon God's work of grace in our heart! But, resting entirely on this Rock, "the Lord our righteousness," it is stable and eternal as the very throne and nature of the God-man Mediator. Thank God for such a rock to build

upon. All else is sand—yea, quicksand—falling from under, and engulfing all who venture on it. Dear friends, come upon this Rock of Ages, and tarry not upon the sand; and if you be there already, fear not that it will fail from beneath your souls. No; it will outlive death and the judgment—survive the wreck of this world, and run parallel with eternity. Blessed be God for such a ceaseless and a glorious hope, so full of immortality. May it be mine!

VII. *Faith in Christ is the only way of our being brought into the enjoyment of it.* We have already seen that it is all of *free promise*—"the covenant of promise." Now, dear friends, you know all that is necessary to the enjoyment of a free promise is just the laying hold of it and relying upon it. Well, faith is just a receiving and resting upon Christ and upon all the promises as in him yea and amen to the glory of God. Nothing more is requisite in us. The fidelity and omnipotence of the promises ensures their fulfilment to the soul that believes and rests on them. There is nothing left for us to do but thus just to receive and rely upon these promises, and Christ in them, by the empty hand of faith. And even this faith, and its act of closing with the covenant, is here previously secured. It is included in the "good" to be done to us. Faith is God's gift—one of his promises and one of the operations of his Spirit. Faith and repentance, and new obedience, are all *blessings* in the covenant, and not *conditions* of it. At the very most, they are only conditions of *connection* and of *order* in the enjoyment of its various and well-regulated blessings. Christ's righteousness is solely and wholly the proper condition. It is heretical to make any thing else (even in the least degree) a proper condition. This destroys the whole grace of the covenant, and changes it into a new, though a modified covenant of works. But, as Paul declares, it must be either all of grace or all of works, otherwise grace is no more grace, or works are no more works. Most freely is this covenant offered to us, and most freely must it be received by all who would partake of it. The thought of the least work or merit on our part would vitiate, nullify—indeed, subvert the whole scheme. It is free as the air. Inhale, and so enjoy—receive, and so be blessed—and be blessed not *for* the taking, but only *in* the taking. We must not receive it as a labourer claims and takes his wages for work done, no matter how little, but as a beggar receives the alms given by the pure grace of the donor, and received by his empty hand. Faith being thus not the condition of the covenant, but only the mode of our receiving and enjoying it, this arrangement secures its free grace. "It is *of* faith (not *for* faith), that it might be by grace, and also be sure to all the seed." (Romans iv, 16.) And it is by faith

in Christ, in order to secure the *unity* of the covenant, otherwise there would be one covenant with Christ and another with believers. But now there is but one covenant of grace made with Christ the head and with believers, as *in* him, and as his members by this faith.

Let us learn, then, from this part of the subject, that all our covenanting with God should consist just in our laying hold of this covenant in Christ by an act of simple and lively faith. Let us not vainly endeavour, in a spirit of will-worship, to make new, modified, and patch-work covenants of our own, the piebald condition of which shall be so much of Christ's righteousness, and so much of our own. This is presumptuously to supersede and reject the sole covenant of God. It is at our peril to dream of this. We ought, indeed, often and solemnly to renew our acceptance of this covenant, and also to take its seals for ourselves and our seed, when opportunity occurs, for it must be laid hold of and appropriated by faith ere it can be personally enjoyed. But let us scrupulously beware of forging new covenants of salvation upon lower terms. It is God's prerogative alone to settle the covenant, and he has established this one to the exclusion of every other, and has appointed faith to be the means of our entering and enjoying it. There are, indeed, what may be called "covenants of duty," wherein the Lord's true people (having already laid hold of this covenant of grace for salvation) do most solemnly bind themselves to the discharge of their duties. But these are kept carefully subordinate to this covenant—are built upon it as their sole foundation, and are made in entire dependence upon the mercy, and grace, and strength, previously secured by it. But let us beware of tampering with, and so vitiating and evacuating God's sole and undivided covenant of grace. To alter man's covenant is forgery—to alter God's covenant is sacrilege, and must prove perdition to the perverter.

We may also see that there is no *real* covenanting with God, except where there is true believing on Jesus—as much faith in Christ as there is in our hearts—just so much real covenanting with God and no more. We may write out the covenant, and frequently sign it; yea, we may even, as in the days of yore, open a vein and subscribe it with our blood, but all will be vanity and hypocrisy, if there be no living and appropriating faith in Christ; and just as often as we *act* faith on him do we spiritually covenant with God. It is not speaking, or writing, or communicating, but only believing, that is real covenanting with God; and if we be not believers, we are still "strangers to the covenants of promise"—hopeless, graceless, Christless, Godless in the world.

And now, in conclusion, Oh, unbelieving friends, you may see your miserable spiritual condition. Being without Christ, ye are destitute of

this covenant. Of course, then, really, and in the sight of God, you have not the enjoyment of any of its rich spiritual blessings. Oh how poor, and wretched, and miserable, then, you must be ! and all the more so, that you feel not your misery, but flatter yourselves that you are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. But though you have no lot or part in the Covenant of Grace and Glory, there is a covenant with which you are closely connected. It is that Covenant of Works under which you were born ; and, having been violated, all that you inherit from it is guilt and depravity—God's wrath and curse—misery here and perdition hereafter. In Adam all are dead, and the wages of sin is death—temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Yet ye are in such love with this Covenant of Death, that you spurn away God's offered Covenant of Life ! Besides, you are all the more guilty, and you must be all the more miserable, for having so often and pertinaciously despised and rejected this offer. You are just, in deeds, if not in words, saying to God, " Lord, I will have nothing to do with thy Son and the Covenant of Life in him : thy gifts be to thyself, and thy blessings to another. Give me Adam and his Covenant ; and, broken though it be, I will run the risk of its curse and perdition." Oh, dear friends, persist not thus in choosing death, by rejecting Christ, in whom alone life is ! Remember, you are not at liberty either to accept or refuse his Covenant just as you please. This is indeed the case with the offered covenants of men. But it is a heinous insult to God, and an act of self-destruction to your souls, to forget or refuse God's covenant of grace and of glory even for a moment. The dignity of the offerer and the value of the offer, should constrain you to close with it this instant. We would beseech you, then, to flee from the broken covenant of works, and to accept of the fulfilled covenant of grace, by closing *now* with Christ in whom it is. Behold once more ere we close—life and death are set before you—the blessing and the curse. Which will you take ? yea, which are you *now* taking—you cannot now be neutral—you are shut up to a choice. If you do not take Christ and life, then by that very negligence you are taking Adam and the curse, not in words to be sure but in deed. Oh, harden not your hearts, and provoke not God again as ye have often done ; and now, when God, as the conclusion of the whole matter, says again, in the words of the text, I will make with thee this everlasting covenant, may your hearts be stirred up to say, Amen, Lord, even *with me*. Lord, let it be even unto my poor ruined soul. Oh, Spirit of all Grace, thus apply and honour this Covenant of all Grace to the praise and glory of thine exceeding grace through Christ the Lord. Amen and amen.

SERMON LXV.

THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST ARE NEW CREATURES.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER O. LAIRD, ABBOTSHALL.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."—2 Cor. v. 17.

ALL the works of God are exceedingly wonderful, and well fitted to excite the admiration and astonishment of his intelligent creatures. Nature is daily unfolding wonders which the wisdom of our fathers never discovered, and will doubtless bring others to light after your eyes and mine have been closed upon the world for ever. The Book of Providence has its mysteries too, which we should study for our profit, though we cannot fully understand them here. And the Kingdom of Grace, in its government, its subjects, and laws, is, perhaps, more mysterious than any; if possible, on that account more like to its author, and still more illustrative of his character as infinite in wisdom, omnipotent in power, and the very essence of whose nature is love. There is a simple majesty and grandeur in the Mosaic account of the Creation, so unlike the coloured description of any human agency, that we cannot fail to perceive that the hand of God is there. When man designs to erect a dwelling place for himself upon earth, we see the bustle of preparation and the noisy labour of workmen; but when God designs to frame this vast universe, he only speaks the word, and it is done. He says, "Let there be light!" and it shines forth at his bidding. Yet in grace, his method of working is more wonderful still. If we wish to cultivate the mind and to improve the heart, it is a work of labour and of time. It may fail after all; and those in whom we take the deepest interest, and about whose mental and moral improvement we feel the greatest anxiety, may, notwithstanding all our pains, be fools in understanding, and the victims of fearful depravity and sin. But when a Divine agent fulfils the promise that "all the children of God shall be taught of God," the effect is what might be expected from the hand that is at work. Under his teaching, the mind is enlightened, the affections become spiritual and heavenly, and the sinner, like a stone hewn out of the rock, and as insensible as a stone to the things of God, becomes a living child, feeling,

loving, and growing; once no better than a piece of mixed clay taken out of the pit, but formed by the potter into a useful vessel, and quickened by the breath of the Almighty, so as to become an intelligent and living worshipper. If the angels, these morning stars of the creation, and sons of God, sang together, and shouted for joy, when they saw and admired the work of creation, no wonder that there is joy in heaven over the *new* creation, when a sinner repents, and becomes the workmanship of God a second time, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Man was the glory of the *first* creation, and the noblest of the works of God. This world was built for his dwelling, and, in the rectitude and holiness of his moral being, he lived upon the earth the picture and image of his Maker. But in the *second* creation, there is a work, if possible, more marvellous still, and, certainly, more full of majesty, mercy, and grace. The Divine Spirit takes an unclean and guilty sinner to make that sinner a "partaker of his holiness," changes the vessel of wrath into a vessel of mercy, and the child of the devil into an heir of heaven. If it was a miracle of Divine power when Jordan was driven back, and its waters ran upward, behold what a miracle, both of mercy and power, when the affections flow in a new channel contrary to nature! The Psalmist asks, "What ailed thee, O thou sea? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" and then he answers the question, "Tremble thou earth at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." So, if we be asked, What turns the stream of sentiments, feelings, and affections in a regenerate soul?—what causes prejudices to remove, the corruptions of the flesh to be driven back, and the whole man to become new?—it is at the presence of the God of Jacob, and by the gracious power of his Spirit. But then, are all our guilty race the subjects of this wonderful change? Alas, it is far otherwise. None can partake of it without a living Christianity and a vital union to Christ, and none can be in Christ without being the workmanship of God a second time. In other words, if any man be in Christ, he must of necessity be a "new creature," and if any man be a new creature, or the subject of a new birth, he must be in Christ.

Let us inquire,

I. *What it is to be "in Christ."*

It is evident that this means a great deal more than an outward profession of Christianity. All who name the name of Christ are not *in him* in the sense in which the Apostle uses that expression, else, all who are admitted into the visible Church would be "new creatures," and entirely changed from what they previously were, which we are all sensible is not the case. The expression is intended to denote, not an ex-

ternal relation of that kind, but a union that is far more close and spiritual. It means such a union by a living faith as enables the believer to derive virtue from Christ, and to receive grace out of his fulness, as the members derive virtue from the head, and the branches from the tree. It means also that those who are partakers of it have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in their hearts and influencing their affections, feelings, and conduct. It is not, therefore, a nominal or imaginary privilege; and though a mysterious and spiritual union, it is yet a real and living one, and productive of the most lasting and substantial benefits. Other unions are formed only to be dissolved. We may, long since, have chosen the companions of our youth, and in our folly have vowed a perpetual friendship, while melancholy experience has told us that the closest and tenderest earthly ties have all to be broken. But the union spoken of in the text is one of the closest intimacy and of the most warm and enduring love. It is the union of a poor, guilty, and perishing creature to one who can save to the uttermost—to a Divine Saviour, whose wrath indeed is worse than death, but whose favour is better than life. A union with a fellow mortal may sometimes be for better, and sometimes for worse, sometimes an occasion of joy, and sometimes a source of bitterness and sorrow. It might be no advantage to be intimately connected with a person of ruined fortune or blasted reputation, for this would only be to share in his calamity, and, in part, bear his reproach. It would avail us nothing to have our fortunes bound up with those of a man perishing in the deep. We might, no doubt, be united together, but it would only be in the cold embrace of the dead, to go down together into a watery grave. Yet, if you be "in Christ," and joined to the Lord by one spirit, so that all your poor concerns become his, and his interests and yours are inseparably bound up together, then you cannot bring him down to your level, but he will lift you up to his kingdom and his throne for ever. *Once* a child, then always a member of the family. *Once* engrafted into Christ, then a branch that never withers. It is true that, notwithstanding this privilege, you may participate largely in the trials of this changing world. The most fondly cherished of your earthly hopes may wither and die. You may live to see the closest connections dissolved, and the tenderest ties torn asunder. You may even have to weep in secret over a love inconstant and unsteady, like the ebbing and flowing of the tide, inasmuch as your heart, in your seasons of sweetest communion, may be filled with love and joy, like a harbour full of water, and at other times empty and dry. Still, *once* "in Christ," you are wedded to him for ever. In joyous or adverse times, in seasons of tranquillity and trouble, in the days of active life or in the dark river of death, you will be "so joined to your living

Head in heaven that he cannot dwell in glory and leave you behind." My brethren, what a sweet and precious privilege is this, and how few by experience understand what it means! Many rest satisfied with an external relationship, while the affections and feelings of their soul are never called into exercise. But what is there in this to afford either profit or joy? Where would be the advantage of a union between two upon earth who were tied together for life, without any union of hearts, or any sympathies and joys in common? So where is the gain of a nominal relation to Christ, if there be no union of the soul to the Lord by one spirit? This may have a withering and deadening influence, tending to lull the conscience asleep, but cannot be expected to produce abiding peace or progressive holiness. Where, however, there is a saving union to Christ, and a believer may be said to be "in him," there is, if I may so speak, a union of hearts. The Lord lays open his very heart, to embrace in the arms of a free, warm, and generous love, all who, by faith, give themselves to be his. And they lay open their heart to him; for how should they not have room in it for the Lord whom they have loved and chosen? If these things be true, I cannot conceive a more interesting inquiry for us this day than, whether we have any reason to conclude that *we* are in Christ. Happily the text furnishes a clue by which we may at least try to ascertain the fact. It gives us a description of those who are "in Christ," and tells us, in language very plain and intelligible, that, "if *any* man be in Christ he is a new creature."

II. *What is it to be a new creature?*

By this expression we are not to suppose that any visible change takes place in a man's features, or in his external appearance, when he is engrafted into Christ and made the subject of regenerating grace. There is nothing outwardly eccentric or peculiar about such a man; yet he is different from what he was, and from the unthinking world around him. The Bible is different from any other book which the world contains. Look at it on the shelf of a library, and this difference will not be seen in its outward appearance; some may be bound up very like it, and others may be far more elegant and beautiful outwardly. But spread *the book* open before you, and see the treasure it contains, and then you may say of it as David said of Goliath's sword, "There is none like it." It is a book that has wrought wonderful changes in the world, that has broken many a hard heart and healed many a broken one. It is a store where many a hungry soul goes for food, and which is relished more than honey dropping from the comb. It contains more wisdom and knowledge than all other books that ever were printed, and it has

done more to make men happy on earth and joyful in eternity. Therefore, though it be just like other books in outward appearance, there is not one the least like it in reality. Now, so it is with those who are "in Christ," and, consequently, "new creatures." In outward appearance they are just like other men. Let them not, however, be viewed externally, as you would look on a Bible in the shelf among other books, but examine a little more closely. converse with them of their joys and hopes, and hear what they can tell, not of their own doings, but of what the Lord has done for them and in them. See how they delight in the Word, in its precepts as well as its promises—what a relish they have for closet communion and intercourse with God—what a horror they feel at sin, and what an anxiety about having it subdued! Then you will perceive that the views and sentiments of their mind, as well as the feelings and affections of the heart, are so completely changed that they are not only different from what they once were, and from the ungodly around them, but really "new creatures."

You have heard of Naaman, a great man in Syria, who was a leper, and therefore labouring under a most loathsome disease, which all his wealth and influence could not cure. But what a change came over him when he had washed seven times in Jordan, and "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean!" So when one is made a partaker of the change referred to in the text, instead of all the faculties of his soul being corrupted and spoiled by the leprosy of sin, a child's heart is given him, and he too is made clean. A man, indeed, may be driven by the force of public opinion, or by considerations of worldly expediency, from some sinful practices in which he formerly indulged, so that, in common conversation, we may hear men speaking of him as a reformed character, and yet, though, in many respects, he may have undergone a visible change, he may after all not be a *new* man. Saul among the prophets, though another man from what he once was, was yet not a *new* man. Jehu, with all his apparent zeal for the Lord of Hosts, was not in reality what he seemed to be. Herod, who heard John gladly, beheaded him at last; and Felix, who was deeply affected by the preaching of Paul, was a stranger to the power of converting grace. The work, therefore, here referred to is not merely what brushes away such outward blemishes as are offensive to human eyes. It will sweep away these, but it goes deeper. It probes the deepest and most secret wounds of the heart, and, by touching the soul, gives a new spring to all its affections, feelings, and desires. Let us illustrate the change by an example: See two men very unlike to one another in sentiment and character; indeed, as diverse and opposite as any two individuals can possibly be,—*the one* not content with cherishing enmity in his heart

to the cross of Christ, but unsheathing the sword of persecution and violence in the hope of putting down, by the hand of power, that cause which excited so much jealousy and fear in the world; bathing the sword in blood, and causing the dungeon of the prison to echo the sighs and groans even of delicate females. The *other*, a man of a soft and tender heart, very jealous of the honour of Christ, and willing to die for his sake; weeping much over human infirmity and sin, and praying night and day that sinners might be saved. The first of these was Saul, the persecutor, before it "pleased God to reveal his Son in him." The second, in one sense, was the same person; his countenance and features the same, and his bodily appearance unaltered, and yet most evidently "a new man;" not merely different in some respects from what he formerly was, but entirely changed so as to become a "new creature." Saul the persecutor and Paul the ambassador of Christ were really as unlike and dissimilar as if they had been two separate persons, born and educated thousands of miles from one another. And, my brethren, you are not able to select two characters in the widely-scattered family of man who are more unlike, in the sentiments of their mind and the feelings of their heart, than Saul a moral and enlightened natural man, and Saul a "new creature" enlightened by the Spirit.

But let it not be supposed that the case is at all different now. A sinner in his natural state and a believer in Christ are both much the same as in the days of Paul. I shall suppose there is some man in this house who was *once* a child of wrath even as others, but is *now* "planted together in the likeness of the Saviour's death;" and I cannot doubt but such a man has undergone, perhaps not so marked and visible a change as Paul, but yet a change as real and complete. Such a man was once, it may be, not immoral, or, in the worldly acceptance of the term, prodigal and abandoned; but yet without God in the world—a creature forgetful of his Creator, living only for time, and having no love to Jesus warming his heart. His soul did not earnestly pant and cry for the milk of the word. He had no communion with the Lord in prayer. He never felt the attractive power of the cross, and was influenced only by earthly considerations, and, in a small way, checked by a natural conscience. But how stands the matter with him now? He is the same kind and affectionate friend—the same loving and tender father—the same dutiful and obedient child he was before—nay, he is far more dutiful in every relation as a husband, a father, a brother, or a child, for he is now influenced by infinitely higher and stronger motives. He was once a formal, but is now an intelligent and spiritual worshipper. He formerly prayed with the lip, if he prayed at all, but now his prayers are the aspirations and wishes of the heart. He was once as much a

stranger to the peace of God and to the communion of the soul with the Lord in heaven as if these things had been no better than the dream of enthusiasm. But now he knows that there is such a thing as intercourse between man and God. I have supposed there may be such a man here. If there be, then he is not only, in some respects, different from what he was, but really a "new man," the workmanship of God a second time, and "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." I shall suppose, further, there is some female in this assembly who, by the Spirit's grace, has been made a partaker of the change I have referred to. Well, she was once, if not called in childhood and early life, a stranger to Mary's experience, who "chose the good part, and sat at the feet of Jesus." She felt that the world had many attractions, for its treacherous pleasures cheated her heart into forgetfulness of God. If the mother of a family, the cares of her household hindered her from caring for the things of the Lord. The children that were given her became entwined in her affections, and beguiled away the time that should have been spent with God. In a word, the love of Jesus had not won her heart, and become superior to other loves. She might have been, as we express it, amiable, graceful, and accomplished; but, at the same time, graceless and without God. There is no spirituality or meetness for heaven in such a character; and nothing like a new-born child of God in a heart open to other loves, but shut against the warm and generous love of Christ. If, then, such was *once* her condition, what is she *now*? She is a learner at the feet of Jesus, while her less anxious sister may be "cumbered and troubled about many things." The attractions of the world have, in a great measure, lost their charms, or have been swallowed up by the attractions of the cross. She values the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Her children have become greater objects of anxiety and care than ever, for she views them as a charge given to nurse and train for eternity. But they do not, as before, engross the time that should be spent with God. Nay, they give her many an errand to the throne of grace; and, if she has reason to believe that any of them have by her been led unto Jesus, she will rejoice far more over them as their spiritual mother than ever she did as their natural parent. Surely, then, the change which has taken place is decided and real; not a partial amendment, but a new spiritual creation, verifying the statement in the text, that if "any are in Christ, they are new creatures."

Enough, perhaps, has been said to shew, that the change here referred to, whether brought about suddenly or in a more gradual manner, is a Divine and entire change, which renders one who is the subject of it a "new creature." If he is a person who was reckless and reprobate

before, having a profane mind, a disorderly walk, and being a despiser of ordinances, then the change will be more marked and striking. But if not immoral in his outward conduct, yet, in reference to his heart, the change will be no less decided and real, even though there be not the same visible alteration in his external walk. Before, he may have professed a regard for Christ and his cause; but his heart was not softened by his grace or constrained by his love. He may have observed his stated and regular prayers, but they were cold and formal. He may have attended instituted ordinances, but they were not Bethels of communion with God. How different is the same man in regard to his spiritual state and experience, when "Christ is revealed in him as the hope of glory!" His hard insensible heart becomes soft and tender. The desires of his soul, and not the formal requests of the lip, are uttered at the throne of grace. He longs for a closer walk with God; his affections flow in a new channel, and his heart and treasure are in heaven where they never were before. Is he not, then, a "new man?" My dear friends, do *you* know any thing experimentally about a change like this? so that your desires are not after the world but after grace—your rejoicing in the testimonies of God more than in riches—your cares not about earthly vanities, but causing you to cry out, "what must we do to be saved?"—your fears not so much of meeting a cross as of sinning against God. If so, the day of your death will be better than the day of your birth. But if not, you can only be poor and miserable outcasts, for if not new creatures you cannot be "in Christ."

III. *What is the necessity for this change?*

One would think there is necessity enough shewn in the text, when we are assured that, without it, we cannot be "in Christ"—can have no interest in his death—and no participation in the blessings of his kingdom. It is plain that this must be the case; for how can a sinner full of impurity and uncleanness dwell with a holy God in a holy place? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and the very heavens are not clean in his sight. Consequently, he can never dwell with sin or admit into his glorious presence above a depraved and guilty sinner, unless first he be changed, and rendered in some measure like to himself. Nor could the natural man participate in the joy and happiness of the redeemed. As a deaf man surrounded with the most exquisite melody—as a blind man with the most chaste and beautiful productions of art spread out before him—as a swine in a garden of flowers—so would the natural man be in the midst of Paradise. Besides, without the change here referred to, all our religion, however sound in doctrine, and apparently zealous, must be utterly vain. How zealous was Jehu! and yet

all was rejected because his heart was not right with God. What a fine blameless character did Paul appear ! and yet, being unconverted, all was but loss. Our hopes moreover will all be cherished in vain. Job likens the hopes of the unconverted to the web of the spider. It weaves its web with great industry and skill, but only to be swept away. So the sinner cherishes a hope that must inevitably perish. Alas ! what a specimen of proud, presumptuous, daring, and unaccountable folly ! He is told that there is no condemnation to them that are "in Christ Jesus ;" but he will seek no sanctuary in this hiding-place. The god of this world has blinded his eyes, and he does not see the matter in its true light. Satan calls, and he is ready ; but the Lord calls, and he sleeps on still. He is told, on an authority he need not question, that there is death in the cup ; but he still continues to sip it. He is assured that it is the broad way on which he walks, and ends in destruction ; but so perverse is he that he will go on it still. He is, in fact, just the old man with a cold heart and a dead soul ; and so long as he is so, however elevated his hopes, they must all certainly perish. My brethren, there is no hope of being saved or entering into life but by a new birth. By your natural birth you came into the world, and by a spiritual birth alone you can enter into the world of grace. " Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

1st, Ye who are strangers to a life of faith and to the power of converting grace, have reason, surely, solemnly to consider the position you occupy. Are ye willing for ever to lose the privileges and blessings of the kingdom of God ? Remember that the work we have been describing is pre-eminently the *work of God*. He who can raise out of stones living children unto Abraham, and can breathe life into bones bleached and dry, can doubtless quicken *you*. Therefore, " what meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God that thou perish not." Meditate on the number and aggravations of your sin. Search the word, which is the sword of the Spirit, and the instrument he uses in converting the soul. Plead for the Spirit's grace to quicken and save. Your condition is sad and dangerous in the extreme ; but there are many in a worse situation even than you. What would the lost give for your *day or hour of grace* ? Yet there is room. The Master's house is not yet filled, and to you is the word of salvation sent. Will ye not come ? I leave you with the exhortation which Gad the seer addressed to David, " Consider with thyself, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me."

2d, If any of you are " in Christ, and so new creatures," see that you cherish with care your new-born life. Grace in the soul is a tender plant in an unkindly soil. As the delicate flower which is a native of

a warmer climate is checked in its growth by a biting frosty wind, so the growth of grace is greatly retarded by the chilling influence of worldly society. It requires to be nourished by constant vigilance, meditation, and prayer. It needs daily the showers that keep it alive. But you may well question its existence in the soul if it be not growing. Is not every kind of life accompanied with growth and progress? There is life in the tender blade of corn that is weighed down by the dew-drop in a summer morning, and it grows till there appears the full corn in the ear. Look at the fruit trees in an orchard when covered over with blossoms in spring, and you will never see them so beautiful as then. Yet what would be the worth of this fine show if these blossoms never ripened into fruit? See a little child whose innocent prattle engages your attention; you may be pleased with its knowledge and intelligence in proportion to its years; you may think highly of its attainments for one so little in stature and of such a tender age. But how great would your disappointment be were you to come back some ten or twelve years after, and find it a babe still! Now, in the spiritual life there must be progress too. And, Oh! be very jealous of every thing which may have a tendency to injure or retard the growth of this heaven-born and valuable life.

SERMON LXVI.

PRAYER IN THE STORM.

BY THE REV. JOHN LONGMUIR, M.A., MARINERS' CHURCH,
ABERDEEN.

"Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses."—PSALM cvii. 28.

THE text supposes the mariner overtaken in a storm, unable to keep his footing upon deck, or profitably to exercise his nautical skill. When he is thus surrounded by danger, and convinced that vain is the help of man, he is led to cry unto *JEHOVAH*. When men are ashore, in the enjoyment of such pleasures as this world can afford, or when' they are afar off upon the sea, with a good ship, smooth water, and a favouring breeze, they care not to retain God in all their thoughts—the prayer-meeting is shunned, and the service perhaps ridiculed. But let a man be stretched upon the bed of death, or be placed on the brink of a watery grave, and then he takes a very different view of matters. There are few situations in which men can be placed, that so forcibly teach them their own feebleness as the raging storm—the blusterer is silenced—the infidel trembles—and hence the ancients were wont to say, "If you would teach a man to pray, send him to sea."

1. *We shall now proceed to consider prayer as a duty.*—When man looks upon the works of creation, he is convinced that there is some *Being* by whom they have been produced, and by whom they are still upheld, far surpassing himself in wisdom and power. In no department of nature is this more evident than in the boundless and unfathomed deep. Where is the man who has stood and gazed upon the ocean weltering around his vessel, and has not been convinced of his own helplessness if he were cast into that mighty deep, and of the power of Him who holds its waters in the hollow of his hand, and who can effectually say to it, in its utmost rage, "Peace, be still?" When he further considers that that this *Being* made him, and that in Him he lives, and moves, and has his very existence, does he not feel an irresistible impulse leading him to cry to that *Being* for help in the hour of danger? Even heathen mariners have taught us this lesson, by placing figures of their gods,

Castor and Pollux, in their vessels ; and when those with whom Jonah sailed were overtaken by a storm, we read, that they cried every man to his god. What reason thus pointed out, revelation has commanded. It leaves not every man, however, to cry to his false god, but directs him to the one true God. "I will that men pray everywhere"—at sea and shore. "In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God."

2. *But prayer ought to be regarded as a PRIVILEGE.*—Are we to look upon prayer as a disagreeable, or at least an uninteresting duty, to which the Captain of Salvation calls us? Oh no; every one that knows his dependant and needy condition will look upon it as a most glorious *privilege*. And is it not an inestimable privilege, that such creatures as we are should be permitted to draw near and hold communion with the King of Glory?—that such helpless creatures may come to Him who is almighty—whose is the kingdom and the power—who can give us blessings that no other can bestow, without which we should be miserable, but with which we shall be unspeakably happy? All God's people have ever considered prayer to be an invaluable precious privilege.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the hour of death,
He enters heaven with prayer."

3. *Prayer is properly defined, the offering up of the DESIRES OF THE HEART unto God.*—Hence, you perceive, prayer does not consist either in *much* speaking or in *fine* speaking. We may pray without speaking at all. We can pray in our hearts, like Moses and Nehemiah; for if we groan under a sense of guilt for deliverance, and pant after righteousness and true holiness, He that searcheth the heart knoweth the mind of the Spirit, and can interpret, and clearly understand, these groanings that cannot be uttered. What a gracious God! Could he have condescended farther than even to take a groan for the performance of this duty! Oh, how inexcusable, then, the man that says, "I cannot pray!"

4. *Prayer must proceed from FAITH.*—Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is—that he exists—otherwise we may as well pray to the wind, or the sea, for this would not be so absurd as to pray to a nonentity—to nothing. We must further believe that he is the *hearer* of prayer—not merely that there is a God. We must believe also that he is the *answerer* of prayer. Knowing that he is not far from every one of us, we may be convinced that he cannot but hear us, but we may not be convinced that he will

control the elements to promote the safety of such sinful creatures as we are.

5. *This leads us to observe that we must pray in the NAME OF JESUS.*—He is our Mediator—our Intercessor—and for his sake, God will hear us. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Christ, the Son of God's love, stands before the golden altar, offering up the prayers of all saints with much incense. "He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession."

6. *Pray IN THE SPIRIT.*—We know not what to pray for as we ought. God takes away even this excuse—the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. Ask this Spirit. Become acquainted with the Word of God; turn its promises into prayer. Thus, in Ezekiel, we have the promise of a new heart; and David shows us how to turn it into prayer, when he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" Ask without doubting. Believe that God is not mocking you, but means what his word says—"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

7. *When you pray, GIVE THANKS TO GOD for mercies received.*—This shows that your prayers should be for particular benefits—special blessings—otherwise you cannot give God glory as the answerer of prayer; and thus, He may withhold other favours till you acknowledge those already received. You could not say with David, "I love the Lord, because my voice and prayer he did hear," unless you had asked and received some special blessing. This is the duty taught in the context. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders." A shipwrecked mariner, the only survivor of the crew, spent two days in fasting and prayer for deliverance. At last, it occurred to him that he should have given God thanks for his preservation. He did so on the third day, and soon after, a vessel hove in sight, and took him off the wreck. In some places, sailors, following the direction of the Psalmist, desire prayers to be offered up for them in church when about to leave port, and thanks to be given when they return.

8. *Should it be asked, at WHAT TIME prayer should be offered up?*—David tells us, that his practice was, to pray morning, noon, and night; and morning and evening are generally found most convenient, both on sea and shore. But the Christian carries about with him a praying frame, so that he can literally comply with the injunction to "pray without ceasing." Standing at the helm, or keeping watch at midnight, a man can commune with his God, and offer up prayers, whose sincerity

cannot be doubted, because none knows of them but the all-seeing God. But our text especially refers to a time of trouble occasioned by the storm; and God has given us this precious promise, connecting with it an important duty, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." The disciples, when overtaken in a storm, cried, "Lord, save us; we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

9. *We ought to CONTINUE in prayer.*—What is good in the storm cannot be bad in the calm. If we wish God to hear us, we ought to hear him teaching us a parable to this effect or end, that men ought *always* to pray, and never to faint. We depend on him every moment, and stand as much in need of his upholding hand on shore as at sea. How many men have been safely brought through storms and dangers at sea, and yet have fallen down between the quay and the vessel, when they thought all was safe! John Newton, after a perilous voyage, went out a shooting, and in drawing his gun up a bank after him, it went off, and carried away the side of his hat. Hence, then, the Christian will always feel his dependence on God for life, breath, and all things; and in every thing, with thanksgiving, he will make known his wants to God in Christ Jesus.

Let us now advert to a few OBJECTIONS that are commonly urged against prayer.

1st, "What is the use of praying—telling God what we want: does he not know without our informing him?" Perfectly—much better than you can tell him. He nowhere represents prayer as necessary to acquaint him with our condition or wants. On the contrary, hear how ingenuously our Saviour says, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him;" and then in the next sentence he proceeds to teach us how we ought to pray. In the same manner, after God had, by Ezekiel, promised many blessings, both spiritual and temporal, he says, "Yet for all these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." The key to the whole matter lies in a verse already quoted, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt GLORIFY ME." His own glory is the highest end that God can propose to himself in all his works. For this end was man created; if, then, he did not cry to God in trouble, and, when delivered, acknowledge that his deliverance came from God, the Lord would not be glorified. Sailors are called upon in our text to exalt him; and the mariners, who cast Jonah overboard, when they saw the fury of the storm abate, "feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and vowed vows." The disciples said, when, in answer to

their prayer, the storm was laid, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him?" It was in a storm that John Newton was brought to his right mind, and led to abandon his profligacy; and we lately read of a captain who had been wrecked eight times before he saw the hand of God, and dedicated himself to his blessed service—before he heard the rod and who had appointed it.

2d, We shall only advert to this other objection. "Every thing," it is said, "is settled in nature, and we are not to suppose that God, at our cry, is to interfere with these arrangements of nature, and work miracles for us." Now, to this very plausible objection we would reply, as our Saviour did on another occasion, "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the *Scriptures*, and the *power* of God." This objection rests entirely upon ignorance, of a twofold nature, of the power of God and of the *Scriptures*. Grant that every event in the life of every man, and that every commotion of the elements, has been fixed, and unalterably fixed from all eternity; the Disposer of all these events surely foreknew the prayers of His intelligent creatures, and made all these arrangements in perfect consistency with them. For who can suppose that the Lord carefully arranged all the tempests of the wind and storms of the sea and had no regard to man, whose soul is worth more than the whole world? We are not, therefore, to imagine that our prayer, when offered up, is then known to God for the first time, and that he cannot alter his plans to comply with it. On the contrary, he foresaw it from all eternity, and so arranged all sublunary affairs, that the fulfilment of prayer might just follow in the natural course of events. Hence this arrangement, rightly understood, should increase our confidence, and encourage us to pray to God.

But let us take another view of the matter. How little do we really know, after the most diligent enquiries of our philosophy, respecting this fixed course of nature, that we talk about so confidently! Can we trace things up to their first causes? or is it not undeniably true, that, after we have proceeded a step or two, we are lost in impenetrable gloom?

For instance, take the case before us. What makes the vessel pitch so fearfully? The waves.—What has raised the waves? The wind.—Whence comes the wind? Why does it blow in this particular direction? What makes it to blow so hard? What answer can you return to these questions? It is just as true now, as in the days of our Saviour, that we hear the sound of the wind and see its effects in straining the rigging or drifting the vessel to leeward, but we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. Some of you have seen it come in sudden

and powerful gusts, just as if it had been sent to you alone, snapping your topmasts asunder before you could cry, *let go!* while other vessels at the distance of a cable's length were carrying all sail in perfect safety and not even feeling it. Hence it is that we can see only the path—the footsteps of Jehovah—upon the waters. We see but the endings of his ways; but who hath seen the beginnings of them—the secret workings of his power? Who hath entered into the habitation of his wisdom and seen the first movement that sets in motion these secondary causes whose effects we behold? How unphilosophical, then, to deny that a power is at work, although we cannot reach it?

But, in denying the efficacy of prayer, we do greatly err, not knowing the *Scriptures*. It is the grand peculiarity of the *Scriptures* over the writings of men, that they bring forward God as ruling and governing all his creatures. He is the main-spring, the prime mover, that gives the first impulse to all secondary causes. The elements are all his servants—the mere instruments by which he executes his designs. Thus the commotions of nature, as well as the effects produced by the works of men, must all be traced to an intelligent mind. When we behold the stately steam-ship swiftly cleaving the deep, we ask how her motion is accomplished. We may be answered, that she is propelled by her paddles; that motion is communicated to their axle by the piston; that it is moved by steam; and that the steam is generated by the application of heat to water. But still comes the question, How were all these things so combined as to effect the propulsion of the vessel? Would the enquirer be satisfied by the assertion that all these arrangements were the effect of chance? Would he not feel assured that an intelligent mind had here been at work? So when we pass from the tossing of the vessel to the agitation of the waves, and from the agitated waves to the wind, we still feel inclined to ask whether there is any superior power that directs and controls the wind? In answer to this question, hear with what plainness and sublimity the *Scriptures* speak. Thus, in the context—"He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves;" and in *Jonah*—"Jehovah cast forth a great wind into the sea." The *Psalmist* elsewhere says—"He bringeth the winds out of his treasures; and he maketh his messengers winds—flieth—walketh upon the wings of the wind." Surely if these passages mean anything, it is that God hath the perfect control of the wind.

Mark, now, how prayer connects heaven with earth. Banish prayer, and you banish God—use prayer, and you bring God forward on his throne controlling the elements. Thus the communication is kept up between earth and heaven—God on his throne sends forth the wind; the wind raises the storm; the storm tosses the vessel; the mariner is

baffled, and at his wit's end ; he cries to Jehovah in his trouble ; and thus the circle is completed. Again, in working the deliverance of the mariner, God does so by means ; he does not founder his vessel, or let loose in its fury a contrary wind, and thus either make the vessel sail under water or right in the wind's eye. No ; but he "gathereth the winds in his fist ;" he collects them into his treasures, he speaks them into silence. Then the waters are calm—the vessel glides along in safety—the mariner is glad—and the Christian mariner remembers to give God the glory due unto his name. This also is set before us in the subsequent context. "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still ; then are they glad because they be quiet ; so he bringeth them to their desired haven. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." That the *will* of Jehovah is thus the guiding principle, was forcibly exhibited by our Saviour, when, at the cry of his disciples, he rebuked the winds and the raging of the water, and then there was a great calm. The men marvelled, as did those in Jonah's ship. What Jesus then *spoke* by voice of man, God silently *wills* in heaven. Thus, again, the communication is kept up between earth and heaven—God restrains the wind—the sea is calm—the vessel pursues her course—the seamen are glad, and glorify God. Thus they begin and end with God. We have a remarkable instance of this in Newton's narrative. The ship was so wrecked on one side, that the seamen were obliged to keep it to windward. After incessant labour at the pumps, and being brought to the brink of despair, the wind came about to the desired point, and blew as gently as their sails could bear. Just four weeks after sustaining their damage they reached Ireland, and, before they were two hours in port, the wind shifted, and blew with great violence ; so that if they had continued at sea that night, they must, in all human estimation, have gone to the bottom ! "About this time," says Mr Newton, "I began to know that there is a God, who hears and answers prayer."

SERMON LXVII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE BELIEVER.

BY THE LATE REV. DAVID WELSH, D.D.

"O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee!"—Ps. lxxxiv. 12.

IN the book of Psalms, we have the record of the experiences of the believer, and the utterance of his feelings in almost every variety of interesting circumstances, and upon subjects of all others the most important. There is not a systematic enunciation of doctrinal truth, or a regular and arranged collection of precepts of conduct, but we have in a much more interesting form the substance of Christian doctrine, and duty, and privilege, brought forward as suggested by the holy Spirit, according to the peculiarities of the situation and character of the sacred writer. Thus, in the verse before us, we have not the mere statement of the truth, that the man who puts his trust in the Lord is blessed; we have it confirmed by the personal experience of the Psalmist himself, and it is breathed forth with all the sympathetic power that can be given to it by a heart overflowing with gratitude to God, and with holy zeal for his glory in the filial affiance of the children of men. All that had befallen him in the course of his eventful life, all that he had witnessed in the ways of divine providence, and all that had been revealed in the law of the Lord, convinced him that they only were blessed who placed their confidence in God; and the goodness of the Lord which he individually had tasted in the fulfilment of the promises, in the holy peace which he enjoyed in the deliverances which were effected for him, and in the hopes set before him, and the persuasion that these blessings were unto all, and upon all them that believed, led him, in accents of exulting gratitude and fervent zeal, to exclaim, "O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

It was by the influence of the holy Spirit that the Psalmist was enabled to put his trust in God—it was in the gracious provisions of the new covenant that he experienced the blessedness of this holy reliance, and it was by the divine inspiration that he was taught to make this record of his rejoicing convictions, that others might be brought to exercise

the same faith, and be glad in his delight. It is to be observed, that the truth contained in these words is not directly addressed to mankind. It was for their benefit that the truth has been recorded, but in the first instance it was addressed to God. We have here the exercise of a soul in communion with God, and in this exercise we have the most convincing evidence of the doctrine revealed. The declaration is made to God himself, as the natural expression of adoration, and thankfulness, and joy; and it is made to him because he alone could bestow upon others that filial confidence which constitutes the true happiness, and highest perfection of our nature.

The doctrines of Scriptures are revealed, that we may walk in their light—precepts are inculcated for the regulation of our conduct, and to these there is added the example of holy men, affording us a living illustration of the spirit in which we are to receive and yield ourselves to the truth, and presenting us at the same time with a constraining motive to obedience. In the record which is given us of the holy walk and conversation, of the spiritual employments and devout sentiments of righteous men, we have an embodying as it were of Divine truth, there is exhibited before us the model according to which we should form ourselves, the temper and spirit which we should imbibe. In this respect there are few exercises more profitable than to take the sayings of prophets and apostles, and to seek not merely that we may thoroughly understand their import, but that the spirit which they express may dwell in us. With this view we propose at this time to consider the words before us; and may the Holy Spirit, who first inspired the Psalmist to utter them, be given unto all of us, that we may not only understand their meaning, and be convinced of their truth, but be so filled with the experience of the blessedness of trusting in God, that we may find no rest till we approach the Almighty himself, and taking his name in our lips, pour forth the expression of all the emotions of thankfulness, and joy and love, in the inspired accents—"O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in thee."

I. Let us, then, in the *first* place, towards this end inquire what we are to understand by trusting in God. In the most enlarged Scriptural sense, the man who trusts in God is he who has such apprehensions of the faithfulness and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, as lead him to repose undoubting confidence in him for the fulfilment of all his promises, and especially for those which relate to the pardon of sin, to protection and deliverance in periods of trial, and to all the blessings of a glorious eternity. It implies an acquaintance with the Divine character and perfections as revealed in the Scriptures, and as confirmed in the experience

of every believer. "And they that know thy name," as we read in the 9th Psalm, "shall trust in thee, for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee." *They that know thy name, i.e.*—they that are acquainted with thy character—as the support of those who are in trouble, as the fortress and shield of those who are encompassed with danger—as the comforter and friend of all those that diligently seek after thee—they that know this, thy glorious character, will put their trust in thee. And as we are all by nature sinners—having broken his holy law and subjected ourselves to his wrath, and forfeited all claims to his support, or favour, or countenance—it is necessary before we can repose a reasonable confidence in him, that we should be acquainted with the revelation he has made of himself as a God of grace, as in Christ Jesus reconciling a guilty world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. If we know not God in Christ Jesus, upon what grounds can we trust in him? We have set ourselves in opposition to his authority—we have disobeyed his righteous commandments—the honour of his government is involved in inflicting punishment upon us as transgressors; and what grounds have we to hope that he will pardon our iniquities, or consult for our safety, or interpose for our deliverance? What confidence can we repose in him who has declared that his righteous soul abhorreth iniquity—that the soul that sinneth shall die—and that cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the law to do them? His bounty to bestow, his wisdom to guide, his power to protect, what can all these avail us if we have awakened his justice against us, and are unable to satisfy any of its claims? Upon such a view of the Divine character, our confidence must be presumption, and our hope must reap shame. But in the glorious gospel we are presented with abundant grounds of holy reliance. A sacrifice has been made for the sins of the world, by which God may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. The Almighty hath declared that he taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that they would repent and turn unto him; and so complete is the satisfaction which has been made for sin, that the faithfulness and justice of God are pledged to bless with the remission of their sins all those who put their trust in the great atonement.

We have, then, the strongest possible grounds for placing our trust in God. We have the declaration of the Almighty himself that he is a God of grace. We have his promise that, if we come unto him in faith, he will receive us graciously, and love us freely, and take away from us all our iniquities. Nor is this all. He has revealed to us how it is that he can exhibit himself to us in this character—he has made known to us the way by which it is consistent with his hatred of sin,

and the truth of his threatenings against transgressors, and the honour of his holy law, and the stability of his government, that he should receive in mercy the penitent who puts his trust in him. And such is the excellence of this method of reconciliation, that the glory of God is promoted in the salvation of souls—that he not only has given us his faithful word, confirmed by an oath, but the most affecting and most certain pledge, in the gift of his Son, of his willingness to receive all those who come in faith unto him; and, while the perfect and accepted works of the Son give him a claim upon the faithfulness of the Most High for the security of all his believing people, the love of God, manifested in the mission of his Son, shews that he is well pleased to fulfil his part in the eternal covenant in accepting those who believe in Jesus, and in blessing them with all spiritual blessings.

Now, to see the excellency of this scheme of redemption—the perfections of the Most High manifested in it—its suitableness to our condition as fallen creatures—its sufficiency for even the chief of sinners—and consequently its sufficiency even for us—to perceive all this, and perceiving it, to acquiesce in this method for our salvation—this is the first step towards putting our trust in God. When we speak of this as the first step in putting our trust in the Most High, we are far from affirming that it is uniformly, or even that it is frequently, the first exercise of the awakened soul in regard to religion. In many instances it may be long indeed ere the soul is brought to perceive the fulness and freeness of the gospel offer, or the warrant that is given to all that hear to believe in Jesus. But, till the nature of this warrant is understood in some measure, and till, in consequence of this, the heart complies with the warrant in some degree, however feeble, the soul cannot be said to exercise trust in God. There may be the efforts of an inquiring mind, or the fears of a doubting spirit, or the sorrows of a troubled conscience, or the agitations of a harassed soul, or the endeavours of a convinced understanding,—there may be the workings of a general faith in the truth revealed, and of hope that that truth may yet be appropriated; but we cannot be said to trust in God till his promises are appropriated by the soul reposing its confidence in them.

This, then, is the first point at which all those who have been living without religion, or who, convinced of its importance, have been making ineffectual efforts to attain it, ought to aim—to see their condition by nature as ruined and undone—to see the suitableness of the offers of the gospel to their condition as perishing sinners—and to embrace those offers with a believing mind. There is not any individual to whom the glad tidings of the gospel are brought who is not invited thus to appropriate the blessings of redemption; and this is the only way in

which they ever can be effectually appropriated. These are points of much importance. There is not any individual to whom the gospel is preached who is not invited to make appropriation by faith of all the blessings of salvation. He is called upon to put his trust in God, as having entered into a covenant well ordered in all things and sure, in which provision is made for every variety of character and condition. "Ho, every one that thirsteth ! come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money"—" Come unto me, all ye that labour"—and " Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And, as every one is invited thus to receive the blessings of redemption, so this is the only way by which they ever can be effectually appropriated. We may think to attain to many of them by our own unaided exertions, or we may think that they will be bestowed, in the abundant mercy of God, without any effort of our own at all. But both ideas are equally inconsistent with that blessed scheme of redemption, by which we are commanded to work out our own salvation, while, at the same time, we are expressly taught that God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. This arrangement presents a speculative difficulty, which the efforts of human ingenuity will never be able to reconcile or explain, but which finds a practical solution in the experience of every true believer.

The first step, then, towards trust in God, and which is necessary, as a preparatory condition, to every other exercise of this grace, is to believe in him as in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. There can be no doubt that there are many who conceive that they are reposing their confidence in God for the exercise of many of his perfections, while they have never been brought to see him in this character. But in all such instances, these hapless individuals are deceiving their own souls. Were we by nature without sin, and in a state of favour with God, then doubtless we might in any situation hope for the divine blessing and assistance, according to our special requirements. But, in a state of enmity as the carnal heart is against him, and alienated as we are from him by wicked works, how can we hope for his interposition in our behalf, till the middle wall of partition is broken down between us—till all grounds of controversy are removed—and till we are reinstated in his favour ; and how can we hope for all this to be effected but in the way of his own appointment, even by receiving his offers of mercy in Christ Jesus ? If we have no love to God—if we are not seeking after him—if we are living in the neglect of the work which he specially requires, it is not pious confidence, but unwarranted presumption, to hope for any token of his goodness.

But while to exercise faith in God as in Christ reconciling the world unto himself is the first step in the trust that is spoken of in Scripture,

and is involved in every future exercise of it, this by no means comprehends the whole of this grace. This habitual reliance upon God as a reconciled Father must be accompanied with the special actings of faith for the fulfilment of the promises, according to our special circumstances and requirements—for light, and encouragement, and strength in the path of duty—for grace to resist temptation—for the sanctified use of affliction—for deliverance from difficulty and danger—and for the final enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in light. The grounds for all these varied forms of the exercise of this grace are, to a certain extent, the same as those already mentioned, namely, the fulness of the divine promises—the completeness of the provisions of the covenant of grace—and the power and the willingness of God to perfect all that concerneth his people. In this more advanced exercise, the grace of filial confidence is most frequently spoken of in the sacred volume. The inspired writers who chose God as their portion, and rested in him as their covenant God, are represented as themselves exercising and as exhorting others to exercise trust in God as able to give them the victory over all their enemies, to defend them in the midst of every danger, and to carry them on from one degree of strength unto another, till at last they should appear before the Lord perfect in Zion. And in these instances of holy reliance it is to be observed, that believers have an additional ground of confidence. In what the Lord hath already done for them, in the instances in which he has strengthened them to do his will or suffer, and in the interpositions he has made for their well-being, in the answer he has returned to their prayers, and in his fulfilment of the promises, they have not only a personal experience of his power, and goodness, and faithfulness, but they have also the evidence of the Spirit testifying with their own spirits, that they are the children of God, and that as children, all the promises are yea and amen unto them in Christ. Not that any additional evidence can render the faithfulness of God in itself more certain, but what comes within the scope of our own observation, and still more, what is a matter of personal experience, produces a greater effect upon our mind than what we only hear of by the hearing of the ear. Thus, though the truth cannot be made more certain, our belief of it may be made more lively. Besides, we thus also receive evidence of our personal interest in the promises. Even in the first hearing of the offers of the gospel, if we are satisfied that the truth is from heaven, we are warranted to embrace these offers, and we may embrace them rejoicing. But then, in regard to this act of faith, there may be a twofold difficulty. There may be a doubt resting in our mind as to whether that is true which we do believe, and there may be a doubt as to whether our faith in it, admitting it to be true, is genuine. This

is to be ascertained only by an examination of the grounds of the doctrines we believe, and by an enquiry into the effects of our belief upon our own mind. The state is similar to that of a man who has been restored to sight. If the restoration has been complete when he opens his eyes, he must experience the pleasing benefits of the light that shines around him. But if the restoration is at first only in degree, he may have doubts as to whether it is the light of the blessed sun that he conceives to be shining, or whether he beholds it with a perfect vision. This can be ascertained only by comparing what he experiences with the perceptions of others, and by examining and comparing the evidence of the different senses of his corporeal frame. What light is to the eye, truth is to the mind, and by an analogous process to that which we have mentioned, we must ascertain whether it is the truth that we are believing, and whether our faith is in perfect exercise. And if we find that our faith works by love—that it gives us the victory over temptations that formerly misled us, and animates us in a course of holy obedience—then we have surely satisfactory proof that our faith is of God. It is of infinite importance that we should “know God;” but it is of importance also that we should ascertain whether this knowledge is genuine; for the Apostle has given us a test for this purpose. “Hereby,” says he, “do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” In addition, therefore, to the general grounds which all who hear the gospel have of putting their trust in God, namely, that he has the power to do all that he promises, and that he is faithful, and will perform, the believer who has manifested his faith by his works, has evidence of his personal interest in the promises, and that he who has begun a good work will carry it on, and at last perfect it. He not only trusts in God, but he knows in whom he trusts; and the instances of the faithfulness of God which he individually has witnessed enlivens his faith, that he who has exhibited towards him such tokens of goodness will continue to love him to the end. In whatever circumstances of difficulty or perplexity he may be placed, he refuses to cast away his confidence, which has great recompence of reward. Like the patient sufferer of old, he is enabled to exclaim, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, for I know that my Redeemer liveth.” In the spiritual life he enjoys, he has the proof, he has the experimental knowledge of a present and of a living Saviour, and he knows the faithfulness of him who hath said, “because I live, ye shall live also.”

It is ever to be remembered that it is the Holy Spirit that enables us to put our trust in God, and that he works out this grace within us by revealing to our souls the character of God as set forth in the gospel, and by affording us evidence in the effects which he produces upon our

character that we are the children of God ; and that, as his children, we have a right to all the privileges of the covenant of grace. This blessed state of mind is opposed to our living in the forgetfulness of God altogether, to seek our happiness and resting all our hopes upon the world and the things of the world, and to a building up of a presumptuous hope upon unwarranted views of the Divine character, and to a giving ourselves up to despair in the dread that we will never be the objects of the Divine care or compassion. And the grace itself, as spoken of in the Scriptures, may be defined to be a filial reliance upon God for acceptance with him, for guidance and support amidst the difficulties and dangers of life, and for an inheritance among them that are sanctified, founded upon just views of the character of God as set forth in the gospel, and illustrated in the experience of sincere believers, and in our own individual experience.

II. I now proceed, as was proposed, in the *second* place, to inquire into what constitutes the blessedness of those who put their trust in God.

And under this head we remark, in the *first* place, that those who trust in the Lord are blessed, because the very exercise of this grace implies that we have received of the Divine spirit. Trust in God, as we have seen under the former head, involves the exercise of saving faith ; and that is the gift of God wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. We cannot by the exercise of our own unaided powers put our trust in God. The natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit of God. We are prone to trust in ourselves, or in the devices of our own imaginations, and the truth as it is revealed appears foolishness to us. If upon Scriptural ground we are enabled to repose trust in God, we have evidence that the Spirit of God has been bestowed upon us. Not that we are asked to believe contrary to, or without evidence ; far from it. It is only in opposition to the pride and carnality of our hearts. The light is good, but our eye is evil ; and the Spirit helps to open the eye that we may see.

In the *second* place, those who trust in the Lord are blessed in the holy peace which they experience.

Peace is the portion of all those who place their confidence in God. "In that day," saith Isaiah, "shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." There is blessing in the very exercise of this grace. A holy composure

diffuses itself over the mind. A Divine tranquillity takes up its abode in the breast. The soul, wearied out and disappointed in the pursuit of earthly vanities, has found at last a satisfying portion: Long tossed upon the billows of a wild and distracting uncertainty, it has entered into a quiet haven at last. ●

From the account which was formerly given of the nature of trusting in God, it must appear obvious that in the exercise of this grace there is every thing to enhance the feeling of security—the magnitude of the dangers from which there has been deliverance—the assured safety which has been attained amidst circumstances which appear most threatening, and the manifestation of the condescension, and mercy, and faithfulness of God in this sure refuge.

In every form in which trust is rightly reposed in God, there is a peace which passeth all understanding that takes possession of the soul. Do we trust in God for the pardon of sin? In order to conceive in any degree the blessedness of those who thus trust, something must be known of the terrors of an awakened conscience, when the soul is brought to perceive that it has violated a righteous law—that it has offended an infinitely holy God—that even in this world it may be overtaken with a punishment greater than it can bear—and that after this world is passed away there remaineth the trial and the doom of the great day of the Lord. Those who are engrossed with the things of this present life—who take little thought of the character of God, as revealed in his word, and illustrated by the visible judgments which often, even in this world, overwhelm the ungodly, and which speak, in language not to be misunderstood, of a more fearful judgment that awaits mankind at last—those who take little thought of those things may make light of the fears of those whose hearts condemn them; but the soul which has been made alive to its sinful state perceives that there is a cause too real for all its apprehensions—a horror of great darkness seizes upon it, and the feeling of sin weighs upon it with a load that is intolerable. To a mind in such a state, where is peace to be found?—where can the conscience-smitten man find an answer to the accusations of his own mind?—what reply can he make to the charges brought against him by the great adversary of souls?—how can he repair the evil he has done to others or to himself?—above all, how is he to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and answer for the deeds done in the body? “Oh, Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in thee!” There is only one source of true comfort to those convinced of sin, and that is, in coming to God as he is revealed in the gospel, and trusting in him for forgiveness. Here there is indeed rest to the weary soul. The very knowledge that we are still in a world in which Christ died for sinners—

that we have still the Word of God in our hand—and that the gospel is preached to us—is calculated to save from utter despair. Farther views of the wisdom and truth, and love of God, as manifested in the scheme of redemption—of the grace of our Lord and Saviour, in suffering the punishment due to transgression, and in bringing in an everlasting righteousness—are calculated to awaken hope in the mind. But it is not till the penitent is emboldened to draw near unto God himself, and, confessing all his sins, and humbling himself in the very dust because of his unworthiness, and acknowledging that he is deserving of nothing but condemnation, and, at the same time, looking to the cross of Christ, pleads the merits of him who was made a sin offering for us, and trusts in this sacrifice as all sufficient—it is not till then that peace arises in the mind. But in this exercise of holy trust there is the blessedness of heavenly peace. He whom we had offended is seen to be reconciled to us. And if God be for us, who can be against us? “It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again from the dead.” The evil we have done to ourselves and to others we must continue to deplore; but, while we mourn in ourselves, we must rejoice in the Lord, who is able to bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion, and good out of evil. The dishonour we have done to the holy law of God must ever keep us humble; but the soul that is thus abased in self is exalted in Christ; for such is the riches, both of the wisdom and mercy of God, in the scheme of redemption, that his glory is promoted in extending pardon even to the chief of sinners. Thus, while the believer’s soul is filled with loathing and abhorrence in the remembrance of his sins, these feelings are absorbed in wondering adoration of the riches of that grace that could forgive them, and he does not even shrink from the judgment which is to reveal the full extent of his unworthiness; for he knows that this disclosure will magnify the pardoning mercy of the Almighty, and the efficacy of the great atonement in the view of assembled worlds. He can unveil his sins before God, and hope for pardon; and it is little if need be that they should be made manifest to the creatures whom God has made. It is, indeed, essential to his peace that he should attempt no concealments with his God—that he should not even seek to make excuse for any of his transgressions, but that he should carry all his sins before the Lord, and that, after looking at them in all their extent,—in all their height and depth, and length, and breadth—he should yet see that the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is greater than them all.

The same remarks may be applied to every particular in which trust is exercised in God. In all of them there is a holy composure of mind arising from a perception of the perfection of the Almighty, of the per-

fect and wondrous adaptation of the covenant of grace to every variety of character and condition, and of the fulness that is in Christ Jesus for supporting and perfecting all his people. Whatever it is for which they place their confidence in the Lord, they feel that their foundation is upon a rock, and that they never can be moved. They have the Divine warrant for their trust, and they know that Omnipotence can effect whatever mercy has promised, whether it is grace to war against sin, or strength to endure temptation, or light to guide amidst the difficulties of life, or refuge from its ills. And the feeling of security is increased by the remembrance of the dangers from which they have escaped, and in many cases, also, by the apparent evils which threaten to hinder the fulfilment of the promises. Formerly, they were without any sure source of happiness—they walked in a vain show—they disquieted themselves in vain; and what abundant thankfulness have they to God, who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. They might still have been pursuing lying vanities—they might still have been the slaves of their own evil passions, and been led captive by the devil at will; and can they ever sufficiently adore the goodness of the Lord, who checked them in their sinful career, and translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son, and enabled them to draw water out of the wells of salvation? The outward evils of their condition, also, often enhance their spiritual blessings. The more the world frowns upon them, the more they are led to value the approving smile of their heavenly Father. Where troubles abound, the consolations of the gospel much more abound. And where outward circumstances appear most adverse, the more they are led to see the value of an undoubting reliance in the Divine providence that can make "all things work together for good." The exercise, then, of trust in God carries the Divine blessing along with it in the holy peace that it diffuses over the mind.

III. But we go on to observe, in the *third* place, that they who trust in the Lord are blessed in the recompense of reward that is promised to them.

The very existence of trust involves some measure of present enjoyment, for it is belief in present, or it is the assured prospect of future, good. Farther, as genuine trust involves the exercise of saving faith, he who exercises it in any instance, is blessed as the object of the Divine favour and regard. And as enjoying the favour of the Most High in the present, he has the pledge that the mercy he now experiences will be continued in a measure always increasing. They that honour God will be honoured of God. And the trust which is reposed in the Most High is acknowledged by Him in the bestowing of blessings, not only of

such as were hoped for, but of such as could neither be asked for nor thought of.

When we speak of the recompense of reward which is promised to those who put their trust in God, we use the language of the Scriptures. And while we humbly bear in mind the lost condition of our nature, so as to acknowledge that of ourselves we are unable to do anything meritorious of any blessing from on high, yet we must also gratefully remember the grace of the new covenant, under which our imperfect graces and services are accepted, and honoured, and rewarded through Christ. In this respect, trust in God is especially distinguished. "Save me, O Lord," exclaims the Psalmist, "for I trust in thee." The exercise of trust is brought forward as constituting a claim upon the Divine protection. And again, in the passage already quoted from Isaiah, there is the promise that God will keep them in perfect peace who trust in him; and the reason is given, because they trust in him. It is to be observed, however, that the very nature of trust in God, as formerly explained, excludes the idea of absolute merit, as if there were any thing in us that could entitle us, of our own right, to the favour of God; for the essence of the grace consists in our believing the promises of God as made to us, who are of ourselves undeserving of any good; and every act of trust in God involves faith in Christ, through whom alone, and in consideration of whose merits alone, we can be accepted.

But with this explanation, there is an obvious suitableness in the promises which are made to the exercise of this grace. And it would be contrary to all our ideas of the Divine goodness were any who in truth put their trust in God allowed ultimately to be put to shame. Among men, when those that have injured us throw themselves wholly upon our mercy, the ends of justice are, in many cases, sufficiently served by their acknowledgment of our right to punish, and the trust they repose in us would make it cruelty not to forgive. When the defenceless and forlorn flee to us for succour, the very confidence they repose in us constitutes a claim upon our aid. Even with the lower orders of existence, when the victim of a savage pastime, in the hopelessness of escape, flies to man for refuge from its pursuer, the appeal is irresistible. And is it to be supposed that when a soul exposed to the snare of the subtle fowler, or borne down by the pursuit of sin and Satan, betakes itself to God for protection, the claim will be disregarded? But this is not all. The Almighty himself has invited us to put our trust in him. He has given his promise that those who hope in him will not be confounded. It is by his holy Spirit that we are enabled to exercise this grace, and everlasting blessings, therefore, must be upon the head of all those who place their confidence in God.

In putting their trust in God, they tender all the honour that is in their power to all the attributes of the Most High, especially to his mercy in promising, and to his faithfulness and power in fulfilling, they renounce all other dependence and acknowledge their utter helplessness in themselves, and thus present an appeal to Divine benevolence. They act according to the Divine authority, and under Divine impulse, and their trust cannot be in vain. Nor is it in vain. He, in whom they place their confidence, has in store for them blessings incomparable and inconceivable in their value. They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth and for ever. Nay, the bulwarks of nature and the strength of the earth themselves are declared to be less sure and of less dependence than the refuge of the Lord's people. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my mercy shall not depart, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, who hath mercy on thee.

We have thus considered, my friends, the nature of trust in God, and the blessedness of those who exercise this grace; and we may now be prepared to consider with what feelings we ought to join the Psalmist in the words before us. If we would in truth unite in heart with the Psalmist, we must learn to exercise trust in God; and if we do, then we will consider it our duty to imitate the example set before us, and to approach the Almighty himself, and pour forth our hearts in those words before him.

We will do this in gratitude and joy, for all things are of God. Every good and perfect gift—every pure and spiritual blessing—cometh down from him. He devised the way by which we might be reconciled to him—he bestows the spirit of affiance—he protects by his Omnipotence all that is entrusted to him! If there be any of you, then, my friends, who have been enabled to put your trust in God, should not your hearts be filled with holy gratitude, that the Lord hath been thus gracious to you. Should not you adore his loving kindness and his truth. Should not your hearts be enlarged to participate in the happiness that has been experienced in the ages that are past, and that is to be experienced in the ages everlasting by those who know the Lord, and trust to his grace; and if these sentiments of gratitude and holy joy do fill your bosom, you will approach the throne of grace, and, in the consideration of your past privileges and future prospects, and in the contemplation of the blessings which the Father of mercies so liberally dispenses, you will, in the fullness of your heart, exclaim, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee,"

But, farther, you will employ these words in earnest desire that the Almighty would bestow upon others that filial confidence which constitutes the true happiness and highest perfection of our nature. If you have indeed tasted the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, the desire of your heart will be that others should participate in these blessings. And while you will be careful to use every means to awaken those to whom your influence may extend to seek after God, you will feel that all your efforts must be in vain without the Divine blessing, and that the earnest prayer for that blessing is the most effectual means you can employ. When you see multitudes around you given up to sinful indulgences, or engrossed with worldly pursuits—careful about many things, and neglecting the one thing needful—fearing to give themselves up to religion lest it might interfere with their temporal employments—the superior happiness of those who put their trust in God will force itself upon your mind. How insecure are all temporal advantages, without the Divine blessing!—of how little value are they even when most secure! How does a divine contentment render every situation the situation of truest happiness! You will bear testimony to the ennobling joys of the righteous, and you will pray that the Almighty would pour down a spirit of wisdom upon mankind, and lead them to seek after God.

There may be some of you who, though convinced that a life of religion is a life of the truest happiness, have in your own experience known it more in its sorrows than in its joys. In your outward condition there may have been much to agitate and perplex, and you may have gone mourning all the day. But do you not see that the cause of the gloom which is within you is that you do not wholly rest upon God? You are more occupied with the things of the present life than with those of eternity. You desire more to bring the will of God to coincide with yours than to submit yours to the will of God. Seek, then, first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; leaving the consideration of the things of time, seek to secure an interest in the new covenant, and then all things will be added unto you. God, in his good providence, will order events to your outward comfort; or, if circumstances continue adverse, you will learn to see that they are working for your good—you will submit to the chastisement of a wise and kind Father—you will even rejoice in your tribulation, and in the experience of the benefit you derive from the severest dispensations, your very trials will add to the favour of the gratitude with which you will exclaim, "Oh Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee!"

SERMON LXVIII.

BIBLE TRUTH THE ONLY BASIS AND DIRECTORY OF SOUND INSTRUCTION.

BY THE REV. JOHN SMYTH, D.D., GLASGOW.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."—Deut. vi. 6, 7.

At no period of the Church's history were the counsels and exhortations contained in this portion of Scripture more necessary than in the present times. A spirit of wide-spread indifference to the words which Jehovah commands is threatening to undermine and subvert all that is most precious to the souls of men. Truth and error;—the religion of Christ, and the lies of Antichrist,—are placed by multitudes on nearly the same level; and it requires no ordinary Christian fortitude to stem the accumulating torrent of latitudinarian scepticism. We need to be thoroughly aroused to a sense of the responsibility which attaches to our possession of "the words which God commands us"—the lively oracles of his Spirit's inspiration—the only infallible directory of faith and practice. To the law and the testimony let us invariably appeal, because, if we speak not according to these, there is no light in us. It is exceedingly instructive to mark how carefully the children of Israel were taught to connect their own welfare and that of their offspring with the saving knowledge of Divine truth. "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Before proceeding to the exposition and enforcement of the text, let us briefly glance at the preceding context to which it stands related. V. 4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." You observe, then, that the first and great commandment of the law—that which is permanently obligatory not upon the Israelites only, but upon the whole human race—is set forth as the sum and substance of religious obligation. It is of the utmost consequence that we attend to the connection here recognised between a right state of affection towards God, and our discharge of relative and social duties. The inspired lawgiver of Israel assumes it as matter of indubitable certainty, that there could be no fulfilment of the obligations which pa-

rents owed to their children, nor indeed of any other class of duties, unless the love of God possessed the heart. *That* is the only security for genuine obedience. To the love of God, as the everlasting fountain of spiritual and moral excellence, are traceable all the healthful and refreshing streams which gladden the domestic and social economy. As the beams of light radiate from the Sun, and impart their vivifying influence to surrounding Nature, leaving no portion of it unvisited, so love to God is the central principle of the Moral system whence all other holy affections and all good works proceed. It does not militate against this statement that Man is by nature fallen and depraved—that he is inherently destitute of the love of God—and that he is alike unable and unwilling to regain it. One grand design of the gospel is to restore to the human soul that primary and best affection—to enthrone it anew within the hidden man of the heart as a living principle, which shall constrain us to serve the Lord with the enlargement of Christian freedom, in order that we may realize in the keeping of the Divine commandments a great reward. As it is a main end of the gospel to create men anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, so means have been appointed and prepared, in every way suited to its attainment. The love of God, it is admitted, never reaches, even in the most matured disciples on this side heaven, the perfection which awaits them when “this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality.” There is, notwithstanding, a *new nature* implanted within the soul by the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit of God. Men are thus renewed in the spirit of their minds. They put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. They “put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” The law of God was, formerly, an object of decided and persevering aversion. They were not subject to it, neither, indeed, could be. A blessed transformation has been effected, whereby they esteem *all* God’s commandments concerning *all things* to be right. They regard the statutes of Jehovah as consonant alike with the highest reason, and conducive to their own present and immortal welfare. Obedience to these is viewed by them not less in the light of privilege than of duty. Wisdom’s ways have become ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.

The foregoing observations may show the necessity of heartfelt devotedness to the statutes of Jehovah, whether they affect ourselves or others. “And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart.” It is not enough that they be deposited in the understanding, and thus intellectually apprehended. Still less is it sufficient that they have a place in the memory, to be thence brought out as subject matters for occasional review. Nor will it suffice that they possess a hold over the conscience, which, as a master faculty, shall sit in judica

decision over the use or the abuse made of them. The words which God commands us must be in our *hearts*—dwelling *there* as in the inmost sanctuary of the human being—moulding, into blessed accordance with their own character, every disposition, and habit, and purpose of the soul. We thus clearly perceive the indispensable necessity of that religion which recognises, as the basis of obedience to its authority, the Divine invitation, “My son, give me thine heart.” How numerous and explicit are the statements of Scripture on this subject! “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” “Out of the heart are the issues of life.” “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”

Let us ever bear in mind that enlightened and devoted love to the Supreme Lawgiver must be co-existent with love to his commandments. It is this sacred principle which renders every service comparatively easy and delightful;—this which makes crooked things straight, and rough places plain, and surmounts obstacles that must otherwise be completely insuperable. Without holy, child-like love, all is mere bodily service which profiteth little—the drudgery of an abject slave, appalled by the punishment due to disobedience, but having no affection towards either the work or Him by whom it is prescribed. In order to emancipate us from a spirit of bondage—to restore us to the glorious liberty of those whom the Son makes free—to constrain us by the power of redeeming mercy—to render our duties at once our honour and our happiness—these, brethren, are some of the glorious objects which the gospel is intended to accomplish, and any thing short of these fails to realize the benignant designs of Jehovah.

It is characteristic of all genuine religion that it is diffusive. Wherever gracious principles and affections prevail in any soul, they are fitted and intended to generate kindred principles and affections in others. There is, in the economy of grace, as in the economy of nature, a law of indefinite expansion, in virtue of which the good seed springs up and brings forth fruit—in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold. That heart in which the words that God commands have their residence, is filled with sacred and benevolent solicitude for the spiritual improvement of others. It is one of the first principles of the Christian faith, and one of its indestructible lessons, that “no man liveth unto himself.” In securing these momentous objects, the order of Nature is observed. We are not required to contravene the ordinary laws of our mental constitution which connect our affections *primarily* with the beloved members of our several households. True religion, like charity, begins at home. It does not *commence* with *what is remote* from our sphere of immediate action. Our blessed Lord and his apostles addressed their precious instructions first of all to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. “Brethren,” “kinsmen according to the flesh,” occupied a primary

place in their regards. In full harmony with such procedure are the instructions of the text, "*And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.*" Nor was that a new or strange exercise in which the posterity of Abraham were commanded to engage. Jehovah bore this memorable testimony to their father Abraham, "I know Abraham that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Gen. xviii. 19. When the Israelites were brought forth out of Egypt by the Omnipotent hand of God, they received similar instructions: "And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." Ex. xii. 24-28. Another memorable example occurs in the monumental stones raised to commemorate the triumphant crossing of the Jordan: "And these twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over; that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever." Josh. iv. 20-24.

Time would fail us to enumerate many similar instances of parental assiduity in teaching the words which God commands. The case of Timothy, however, is so pertinent and instructive, that we must not overlook it. That young minister had been carefully taught the good ways of the Lord. His mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois, are among those devout and honourable women whose "unfeigned faith" is recorded in the imperishable pages of inspiration. Referring to the invaluable advantages which he had enjoyed in early life, Paul thus exhorts his "dearly beloved son," "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them: and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15. We are thus richly furnished with both precepts and examples illustrative of the obligations enjoined by the text. Much seasonable instruction might be added from

the history of households that cared for none of these things. The degradation and wretchedness, which followed such neglect, speak volumes in regard to the magnitude of the duties inculcated. Wherever families are thus left in ignorance of the words which God commands, they become a moral pestilence—a curse instead of a blessing to all around.

It is time that we turn our serious attention to a great outstanding truth set forth in the text, viz. that they were *the words which God commanded*, that those parents were enjoined to teach diligently unto their children. And what were those words? Not assuredly a mutilated abridgment of certain portions of the Divine law. Not an intermixture of that law with the doctrines and commandments of men. Not a meagre outline of natural theology and moral precepts which should be inoffensive to the prejudices or the erroneous tenets of certain persons—avoiding scrupulously whatever is of vital moment to the soul. Such procedure would, doubtless, have subjected those who adopted it to the heavy manifestations of the Divine displeasure—would have exposed them to the wrath and curse of Him whose word is a complete directory of human belief and conduct. Various methods were, doubtless, employed, adapted to the age and capacities of both teachers and taught. All of them, however, assumed the value and necessity of religious instruction as the only security for personal and domestic godliness—that godliness which is profitable unto all things, having promise both of the life that now is and of that life which is to come. The intelligent and pious Israelite was wont to instruct his children, or others confided to his care, in the Being, the perfections, the government, and the will of Jehovah—not by a process of abstract reasoning, nor even mainly by leading them from “Nature up to Nature’s God.” It was not necessary for him to task the opening mind by philosophical disquisitions on the Great First Cause, and the obligations logically deducible from creature-relationship to Him in whom all live and move and have their being. “The first principles of the oracles of God” were in his hands. They had been engraven by the Supreme Lawgiver on tables of stone—befitting emblem of their imperishable duration. The law of the Lord was comprehensive of every obligation pertaining to mankind as dependent and responsible creatures. It contained “whatsoever things are true—whatsoever things are honest—whatsoever things are just—whatsoever things are pure—whatsoever things are lovely—whatsoever things are of good report.” Nor was this the entire extent of Israel’s distinction in the sight of the nations. Their history, as a people, was a standing monument of the most precious revelations of Jehovah’s character and supremacy. Whithersoever they turned their eye—whether it rested on the past or the present—whether they looked back to the land of their recent captivity,

their house of bondage in Egypt, or surveyed the place into which the Lord their God had brought them—whether they examined the “law of commandments contained in ordinances”—the manifold provisions of their ceremonial institute, or considered the enactments of their judicial polity, they possessed the most ample materials for the best of all instruction in the words which God had commanded.

It is unnecessary to go beyond this chapter in order to be fully satisfied with respect to these matters. V. 20, “And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, what mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you, then thou shalt say unto thy son,” &c. &c. Were such the exercises in which the ancient people of God, his selected heritage, delighted to engage? Were they observant of them not only at stated seasons, but accustomed to talk of them when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up? Were they so familiarized to their thoughts as to be topics of habitual and earnest contemplation? With what vastly augmented force do they come home to *our* consciences, for whose admonition they were written! How inconceivably greater is the obligation incumbent upon *us* to teach diligently the words which God has commanded, unto our children and unto all others, as we have opportunity! It does not come within the scope of this discourse, to examine the special and indispensable qualifications requisite for conducting such instructions. Christian intelligence, discrimination, and zeal, directed by the Word of God, and exercised in prayerful dependence on his Holy Spirit, will supply whatever is lacking or necessary in these respects. It is of ineffable moment, that the teacher of others be himself savingly taught of God; that he inure himself to the keeping of his own heart with all diligence, that he set a vigilant watch over his temper and his speech, that he be in deed and in truth a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all whom he would enlighten in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

In the preceding remarks, our attention has been specially directed to the obligation of instructing our children and others in the words which God has commanded, for the obedience of faith, as these words are contained in the Sacred Oracles, the *whole* Word of God, for “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and is profitable for these purposes.

Let the young be diligently taught their apostate and depraved condition as federally connected with their First Parents, in whom all sinned and fell. Let their faith be steadfastly directed to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; the only name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved. Teach them diligently

the eternal dignity of his person as Immanuel—God manifested in the flesh—the incarnate Son of the everlasting Father, one with Him and the ever blessed Spirit in the incommunicable fullness of the Godhead. Teach them diligently the intrinsic glory and absolute necessity of Immanuel's spotless obedience, and vicarious atonement, as the Lord our Righteousness and our Redeemer. Instruct them in his threefold relation to the universal Church—its sole Prophet, by whose word and Spirit we are taught the whole counsel of God—its sole Priest, whose one sacrifice has for ever perfected them that are sanctified—its sole King, from whom it receives every commandment, and on whose head are many crowns. Let the young be taught, with equal diligence, the distinct personality and operations of God the Holy Ghost—their incessant need of *his* divine illumination—of *his* renewing, sanctifying, and comforting agency. Press earnestly home upon their minds and hearts those sacred incentives to holiness in all manner of conversation which spring from a reverential yet filial sense of the supreme authority of God our Saviour, who loved the Church and gave himself for it. By all that is solemnizing in the terrors of the Lord—by all that is attractive in the constraints of redeeming love—by the majesty of Sinai's fiery law, and the still small voice of Gospel invitation—by the glories of heaven, and the torments of hell—seek to impress deeply on their souls the reality and the results of the words which God commands us. By instructions so communicated, in a spirit of earnest, affectionate, and prayerful reliance on the grace of the Holy Ghost, inestimable benefits will accrue to your households, to society, and to the Church of God. It is in the use of such divinely appointed means, that the exceeding great and precious promise of Jehovah is fulfilled, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed; and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass; as willows by the water courses."

Such are the characteristic qualities of that instruction which the house of Israel was commanded to impart; and such, likewise, must be the distinctive features of *all* parental instruction. The basis of it is truth, eternal, unchangeable truth. Without this there is no root from which the fruits of righteousness can ever spring. Jehovah has magnified *his word* above all his name. It is *by the knowledge and belief of the truth* that men are savingly converted and made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Our Lord's earnest prayer for his followers was, "Sanctify them through thy truth, *thy word is truth.*" Let us be impressed with the belief, that there is no spiritual life, no holiness, nothing, in short, worthy of desire or pursuit apart from the *truth of God*. But, what is truth? asks this and the other adventurous theorist in this age of multifarious and undisciplined speculation. The Lord Jesus

Christ has answered the question in words already cited, "*Thy word is truth.*" To the same purport is the language of David, "*Thy word is true from the beginning.*" Take away that word, "*the word of the truth of the gospel,*" and there is no religious, no moral certainty in creation. You leave the spiritual system, a world without a sun, in which men of all degrees are blind leaders of the blind. You vitiate the principle of the religious life at its fountain head; and all that you leave behind, whatever lettered infidelity shall aver in its pride or scepticism, is the darkness of the shadow of death. And shall we confine (it is asked by some), the instruction of the rising generation within the narrow limits of the Bible? Shall literature, and science, and the fine arts, and all the pleasures of imagination, be proscribed from our families and our schools, that we may indoctrinate the young and susceptible mind in the peculiarities of theological systems? Is such procedure consonant to the dictates of enlightened reason—to the progressive development of the human intellect—to revelation *soberly interpreted*? Be warned, my friends, against the specious sophisms that are insidiously propounded by many, lest you be tempted to make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. No Christian parent, no Christian teacher, no Christian Church interdicts any branch of useful knowledge. On the contrary, the Christian faith recognises *all* departments of the created universe as subsidiary to the elucidation of the wisdom that is from above. There is no loss, but positive gain, to the disciple of Jesus when arts and sciences, and all the stores of human knowledge are (in the language of the father of modern philosophy*) "*handmaids of religion.*" The Bible has nothing to fear from any field of human investigation. Whether we scan the heavens with their stupendous hosts of planetary systems, suns circling suns throughout the trackless regions of infinitude—or whether we descend into the bowels of the earth and explore its profound abysses—or whether we scrutinize the properties of the ocean, and the laws which regulate its movements—or whether we enter within the intellectual and moral economy of the universe, in all its varieties of thought, and feeling, and responsible agency—we behold the perfect, undisturbed harmony of the whole with the truth and the authority of Scripture revelation. The Bible stands forth in peerless majesty, with this inscription on every page, "*thus saith the Lord,*" the rightful claimant to the reverential homage and unqualified submission of every created intelligence. The Bible is the word of the living and the true God, himself "*the sole Lord of the conscience,*" and demanding, *on his own authority*, that men receive it as the ingrafted word which is able to save their souls. Whilst we are not forbidden to

* Lord Bacon.

use those lesser lights which the beneficent Creator has provided for our guidance, in mounting even to the summits of the hill of science, the Bible must ever be our polar star in life's eventful voyage, our heaven-replenished directory to the Hill of God, the mansions of our Father's house, in which Jehovah himself shall be his people's everlasting light, and their God, their glory.

Let us learn from the foregoing observations to prize more highly than we have ever yet done, the words which God commands; to feel that more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. "Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."

"Education without Creed" is the favourite demand of multitudes in the present age. Where Christianity is *desired*, let it be conceded, they say, but do not offend the belief, nor even the prejudices of others. Do not, on any account, disturb the contemplations of the worshipper of nature's divinity, by whispering the absolute necessity of Scripture revelation. Do not, for any considerations, speak of a Divine Mediator and a sanctifying Spirit to a disciple of the Unitarian faith. Do not breathe a suspicion in the hearing of the poor Roman Catholic as to the soundness of his tenets. Men ought to be forbearing and charitable, not judging others lest they be judged, not obtruding *any specialities of religious belief* upon those who differ from them. Let us resolve all diversities into the imperfections of the human mind in this probationary state, and embrace as one brotherhood the worshippers of "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord." And what, we enquire with all earnestness, do these pretensions to universal charity involve, but the veriest infidelity that ever disguised itself, like Satan, under the garb of an angel of light? Will such unblushing disregard of *all* religion, such latitudinarian indifference respecting "the one thing needful," abide the scrutiny of Him who hath declared "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*? No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Will it tranquillize the agitations of an awakened conscience in any parent, that he left his offspring to blank uncertainty in seeking the road to heaven? Be assured of it, that there is no road but one. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." If souls perish through our wilful neglect, their blood will assuredly be required at our hands. The signs of this present time are to the last degree ominous of mighty and rapid changes. The whole social system is heaving from its inmost depths to its remotest circumference. The enemy has come in as a flood. The ark of Britain's safety—Bible truth—is assaulted on every side. The ruthless infidel, the superficial sciolist in philosophy, the secular politician, who trims his sails to every shifting current, the Machiavelian Jesuit,

the cold-hearted man of the world, are all combined with one accord against the paramount, the exclusive supremacy of the words which God commands. The Protestant churches of the empire are torn in pieces; and religion, like a floating wreck, is tossed to and fro on the raging billows. And what, brethren is our position? Are we on the Lord's side? Are we at our post, the post of divinely commanded duty? Does the Captain of the Lord's host see us clothed with the whole armour of God? Does he find us in humble, earnest preparation for the day when there shall be upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity—men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. How sublime and consolatory the experience of the Church of Philadelphia in circumstances not dissimilar, "*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly; hold that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*" Rev. iii. 10-11.

As a nation, the land of our fathers was long honoured to hold a commanding place in bearing witness to the truth of God, to the words which he commands. Her schools of learning, her halls of justice, her legislative assemblies, the great councils of senatorial wisdom, her altars and her throne, all recognised as their sheet-anchor the statutes of the living God. And, whilst Britain continued faithfully to uphold Bible truth, and to teach it diligently unto her children, Jehovah fulfilled his gracious promise, "them that honour me, I will honour." Other lands felt her power because the Lord was with her, the defence of the nation, and the glory in the midst. We have, alas! lived to behold widely different scenes. Her great men, and her mean men, have consented to "worship the dragon which gave power unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast saying, who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

It is cause of special thankfulness unto God, that amidst manifold and grievous defections, there is a goodly number of leal-hearted men who have not bowed the knee unto Baal; and who, with the good hand of their God upon them, will not become weary nor faint in their minds in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints. May He who turneth the hearts of men as he turneth the rivers of water, mercifully interpose for our help in this appalling crisis! May He come and save us, turning the counsels of Ahithophel into foolishness, and suffering not the sun of our nation's glory "to go down whilst it is yet day."

SERMON LXIX.

THE UNTIRING TRAVELLERS.

BY THE REV. JAMES ANDERSON, A.M., LATE OF ST FERGUS.

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."—
PSALM lxxxiv. 7.

AT the three great anniversaries of sacred commemoration among the Jews, all the males in Israel repaired from their several locations to Jerusalem. It must have been an interesting and imposing spectacle to see the many thousands of Israel journeying, heart and hand together, to mingle their devotions in one national act of worship. Loving the place where God's honour dwelt, they loved all the ways which led to it, and were glad when it was said unto them, "Go up unto the house of the Lord." Their company received fresh accessions as they moved onward. Every hamlet in the land of the vine and the olive poured forth its tributary stream to swell the large and living current of rejoicing worshippers which flowed exultingly along towards the holy city. Individuals, instead of growing weary of the way, felt their strength refreshed and invigorated, as every successive stage brought them nearer to the object of their hopes, and the termination of their journey. The feeble among them became as David—they went from strength to strength till every one of them appeared before God in Zion. Glorious things are spoken of Zion—as the city of the Great King—as the place where he recorded his name—where the visible manifestation of his propitious presence was vouchsafed—and where he received the homage of an adoring people. It was an emblem and a type of that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—where the Most High hath fixed his loved abode—where the uncreated glory is displayed in all its ineffable effulgence—where the song of salvation is never silent—and where all the dispersed of Israel shall eventually be gathered into one. Now, in journeying to this celestial temple, believers, just like the Israelites in travelling towards the earthly Jerusalem, go from strength to strength till every one of them appears before God in Zion to receive the end of his faith in the salvation of his immortal soul.

What I propose, therefore, in farther addressing you at this time, is to advert, in the *first* place, to the progressive nature of the Christian's course; *secondly*, to the means by which he gathers increasing strength and energy for its prosecution; and, *thirdly*, to its blessed and glorious termination.

I. We are, then, in the *first* place, to advert to the progressive nature of the Christian's course. He was once dwelling at ease in this world, caring for nothing beyond it, and quite content to have his heritage on this side Jordan. But in a day of power—in an accepted time—he has been awakened to a conviction of his natural distance and estrangement from God, and of the guilt, and the danger, and the death by which he was imminently and hourly encompassed. Under the guidance of a heavenly teacher sent from God, the spirit of light and of conviction, he has been led to estimate, in some measure, the littleness of time compared with the magnitude of eternity, and the utter worthlessness of this passing world when weighed against the priceless value of the next. He has felt the attractions of the better land—the longings of a heart which feels the utter emptiness of all created enjoyments to satisfy its cravings. He has been impressed with the desire, and he has put forth the endeavour to reach the haven which the gospel reveals to his hopes, and he asks the way to Zion with his face thitherward. He has actually entered upon the path—the narrow path which alone leads to the eternal city. It is his full purpose of heart to finish his course, and to prosecute it with untiring perseverance. But though he is full of ardour and bounding with hope, he is yet weak in himself for the long and perilous and toilsome journey which stretches out before him. Of the full extent of his weakness he may not be conscious; but it is not, on that account, the less calculated to retard and impede his movements along the heavenward road. He is burdened with a load of infirmities—the enervating venom of corruption has not been completely expelled from his moral system. He has been under the hand of the Divine physician—the deadly malady has been arrested in its progress—but his sickly hue and feeble step sufficiently indicate that his spiritual health is not thoroughly confirmed. While the path is smooth and unencumbered with difficulties, he travels onward with apparent ease; but when the steep places of self-denial are to be surmounted, or the turbid streams of adversity to be forded, or the onset of corrupting allurements and antagonist influences to be resisted, he begins to betray his weakness, and is ready to halt in his journey, and to slumber, like the exhausted traveller, by the way-side. A consciousness of the want of that innate vigour on which he had fondly but foolishly calculated at the outset, ge-

nerates a thousand heart-depressing fears and apprehensions. But if, instead of yielding to despondency, or turning back unto perdition, he braces himself with fresh energy by looking to the great depository of Divine grace for the needed succour, he will soon learn to tread with a firmer step, and eventually to run in the good ways of the Lord. The raw recruit becomes, by custom, reconciled to the fatigues of the march, the hardships of the lengthened campaign, and the perils of the battlefield. The child which, first essaying to walk, catches hold of every thing for support, soon learns, by repeated experiments, how to balance itself, and to ramble at random with fearless freedom. The stripling, who at first recoiled from the labours of the harvest-field, soon becomes, by the use and exercise of his hidden energies, able to bear the burden and heat of the day. The man who, unaccustomed to travel, felt wearied and exhausted at the end of his first day's journey, experiences less and less lassitude and fatigue at the close of every successive stage of his progress. Now, the law of habit, to which all this is referable, has its natural operation in the exercises and duties of religion. Use and repetition make the work and the way, which at first were difficult and painful, by slow but sure degrees, easy and pleasant. He who at first shrunk from every cross which self-denial imposed, and stumbled at every difficulty, and startled at every danger which opposed his progress, comes in time to feel that the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light, and can bid defiance to all the perils and impediments which beset the path of prescribed and appointed duty. In proportion as the religious principle gathers strength within him, from close walking with God, and fervent and frequent waiting upon him, his convictions will become deeper—his resolutions more firm and inflexible—and he will be less and less liable to be moved away from his steadfastness, or to be exhausted with his work. For the constant calls of duty he will have a constant power. He will have a healthiness and a heart for all his incumbent undertakings, and the way, as he advances, will be cleared before him. "Every valley will be exalted, and every mountain and hill will be made low; and the crooked will be made straight, and the rough places plain." And this will always be the case just in proportion as faith triumphs over sense, and keeps its eye fastened on the source from whence his aid must come. It was sense which brought the timid disciple to Jesus by night to avoid the eye, the irony, and the enmity of a hostile world. It was faith which afterwards led him so fearlessly to assist at the funeral of his Lord, while more flaming professors were appalled, and fled from the scene of danger. The trampling reed had become like a cedar of Lebanon, and while the bows of the mighty were broken, the feeble was girded with strength. It was sense which made

Peter quail under the accusations of a female slave—it was faith which, in his after history, qualified him to strengthen his brethren, and nerved him with courage to confess Christ so boldly before his murderers, and eventually to submit to a martyr's death. Now, as the Christian progresses in faith, so will he grow in all the other graces and virtues and offices of the Divine life, inasmuch as faith is the grand artery which conveys the aliment of vitality to every part of his moral constitution. And just as the child in health experiences an expansion of all the parts of the body till it arrive at the fullness of the stature of mature age, so does the Christian increase with the increase of God in the whole man. One part is not invigorated whilst others decay. His repentance will be characterized by a greater hatred to sin—not so much on account of its penalties as of its pollution—its opposition to the Divine nature—and its resistance to the infinite authority of God; and he will groan within himself more earnestly with heartfelt longings which cannot be uttered after an entire freedom from the body of this death. His affections will become more spiritual in their exercise, more upward in their tendency. His earthly adhesions will hang more loosely about him. He will become more alive to the realities of the unseen world. These will occupy more of the sphere of his attention, and dictate more the resolutions of his mind. His love to God—his benevolence to his fellow-creatures—and his affectionate sympathy for the household of faith, will perpetually improve in fervour, activity, and enlargement. His obedience will increase in cheerfulness, promptitude, and self-denying exertion. His motives to obedience will be higher and purer—more connected with the constraining influence of redeeming love, with gratitude for past mercies, and delight in present duty. His resignation to the afflictive dispensations of Providence will become more quiescent, patient, and uncomplaining. His zeal, if less fiery, will assume the complexion of a more enlightened, steady, vigorous, and well-sustained endeavour to serve his generation according to the will of God. His self-government and Christian moderation will be still better known unto all men. His fortitude, mailed with a growing conviction of Divine truth, will be displayed in a more uncompromising adherence to what is right—in a more unbending resistance to what is wrong. Thus will he go from strength to strength, while the beauty of holiness will be daily brightening upon him, and his affinity and relationship to heaven made thereby increasingly manifest. The tenor of his way may be more noiseless than at the outset; but it will be more even, regular, and uninterrupted. His feelings may have less vividness in their outward expression; but they will have greater depth, and be far more influential. There may be fewer blossoms; but there will be much more fruit. The

deep flow of his piety, like an under-current, will manifest its hidden direction in the upper stream of his visible conduct, for his life is hid with Christ in God; but the life also of Jesus is made manifest in his mortal body. Having thus adverted to the progressive nature of the Christian's course,

II. Let us now, in the *second* place, attend to the means by which he gathers increasing strength and energy for its prosecution. In coming up from the remote parts of their country to worship at Jerusalem, the way of the Israelites lay through an arid and sandy desert, in which they were ready to faint for thirst, and thus to lack strength for their journey. But, to obviate this inconvenience, they found in the vale of Baca numerous little tanks filled with the rain of heaven, which refreshed their spirits and recruited their languishing energies. Now, what the vale of Baca was to the Jewish pilgrims, the word and ordinances of God are to the heaven-bound traveller. Just as the little pits in the desert contained the rain which came from above to confirm the ancient inheritance of the Lord when it was weary, so are ordinances the instituted receptacles of the descending influences of Divine grace which come down like showers that water the earth to revive and invigorate the soul that thirsts for them. The pools without the rain that filled them would have yielded no refreshment to the way-worn Israelite, and ordinances without the living water of the Spirit are but empty wells to him who waits upon them. All our springs of hope and comfort are in him—from him the streams that make glad the city of our God flow as their source—to him they return as their consummation. In his best state the believer is weak in himself, and the toils and the trials of the way are apt to sicken, and oppress, and induce a weariness of the flesh and of the spirit. But the promise stands fast for ever, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth them for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them." When the Christian, amid the languors of his pilgrimage journey, repairs to the wells of salvation, and drinks in these consoling assurances, "My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in weakness;" "As thy day is so shall thy strength be;" "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he will sustain thee"—when he appropriates these refreshing and reviving cordials, his nerveless energies regain their tone—his susceptibilities of holy feeling are quickened—his capacities for dutiful exertion are strengthened—his trembling resolution confirmed—his youth renewed as the eagle's—and the promise is fulfilled (Prov. iv. 12), "When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened." Thus

he goes from strength to strength ; and where is the Christian who has not again and again gotten power to his faint, and comfort to his sorrowful, and decision to his wavering heart, by waiting upon God in his ordinances ?

But, again, the Israelites, in going up to Jerusalem, were accustomed to travel in companies. This served the double purpose of self-defence and mutual accommodation. They were strengthened and encouraged by the society of their fellow pilgrims, who divided the toils of the journey, and whose presence and converse animated them to prosecute it to the end. Union and co-operation are powerful stimulants in any pursuit. The society of those who are like-minded, and who are in quest of the same object, never fails to quicken and sustain our individual desires and endeavours to achieve it—for “as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.” There is a community of interests and feelings among all the members of the household of faith. Their friendship is not like that of the world—a compact which necessity makes with selfishness. It is the union and harmony of kindred minds. The sacred chain which binds them to Christ, binds them to each other in one holy brotherhood. They are travelling the same road—they mind the same things—they breathe the same desires—they speak the same language—they are members of the same family, and heirs of the same inheritance. Thus closely associated, the burdens of the weak among them are borne by those less heavily laden, and their infirmities strengthened by the strong. They share each other’s sorrows, and are helpers of each other’s joys. They provoke one another to love and to good works. They nourish their piety by taking sweet counsel together—“for as ointment and sweet perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.” (Prov. xxvii. 9.) Dear to the home-sick exile is the theme which reminds him of the land where his affections dwell, and pleasant do the pilgrims of Zion find it to speak one to another of the home to which they are hastening. It beguiles the tediousness and softens the ruggedness of their path. Every creature courts the society of its kind. No sooner was Paul converted, than, feeling the appetencies of his new nature, he essayed to join himself to the disciples, that he might get light from the lamp and warmth from the fire of his brethren. And no sooner does any man feel the power of religion than he wishes to associate with serious Christians, that he may be edified by their counsel, aided by their experience, and encouraged by their sympathy. His enquiry, then is, “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon, for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions.” (Song i. 7.) The most established servants of God have gratefully

and gladly acknowledged the sweet and sensible refreshment which they have derived from Christian fellowship. When Paul met the brethren at Appii Forum, who came to condole with him in the day of his distress, he thanked God, and took courage, (Acts xxviii. 15.) And, again, in writing to the Corinthians, (2 Cor. vii. 6, 7), he tells them how he was comforted by the coming of Titus, and by the assurance which he gave him of their continued sympathy and affection. It is thus that the believer is quickened and encouraged in his course by the conviction borne in upon his mind from intercourse with his brethren that he is not a solitary pilgrim to Zion, and that, if he faint in the way or draw back, he will lose the blessedness to which others with whom he has been associated are fast hastening, and sure of obtaining. When he looks upon the Christian in his own family—in his own neighbourhood—in his own church, who, by patient continuance in well doing, is pursuing the race that is set before him, he cannot but wish that his lot may be linked with his, and he feels a fresh impulse given to his zeal to make his calling and election sure. And thus he goes from strength to strength.

Farther, in going up to Jerusalem from the several parts of their country, to worship the Lord in the place where he had recorded his name, the Israelites, we are told, cheered their spirits and beguiled the weariness of the way by certain sacred melodies which they sung at intervals and in concert as they travelled along. The Psalms entitled Songs of Degrees, are generally understood to have been sung on these occasions. Now, this was a fruitful source of solace and refreshment. This made the journey pleasant and delightful. It is thus that the joy of the Lord is the strength of the Christian pilgrim. Experience sufficiently certifies that few undertakings are lasting or successful which are accompanied with no pleasure. It is only when we feel something attractive in our work that we can be expected to be constant or zealous in the performance of it. Now, the duties of religion, when prompted by right motives, impart a satisfaction and a pleasure to the pious mind which may be said to give new strength for performing them, inasmuch as the performance is thereby rendered easy, agreeable, and delightful. Every grace of the Spirit gives pleasure in its operation. Even repentance, from the consciousness of its being a right feeling, and from the relief which it affords to the sin-burdened breast, imparts a joy to its sorrows which makes its briny tears sweet. Every token of grateful obedience which the Christian is enabled to render to his Redeemer overspreads his heart with gladness. And thus, while the Divine requirements are felt to be a yoke of bondage, and an oppressive imposition, by the earthly, carnal, and unconverted mind, they are to the believer the subject of his daily song, and the source of his daily comfort.

They lead him onward from pleasure to pleasure, and, under the cherishing vigour of gracious communications from above, suited to his day of duty and his time of trial, they make his way plain and prosperous before him. Thus he goes from strength to strength, singing in the good ways of the Lord, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his own name's sake."

Once more, the Israelites were animated to the prosecution of their journey, by the hope of reaching Zion, and the prospect of the sacred enjoyments which awaited them there. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but their's brightening daily into fuller radiance, shed a ray of gladness over their desert path. They knew and felt that every successive step was diminishing the distance which intervened between them and their heart's desire. And when at length the glittering spires and lofty battlements of the city of the great King burst upon their delighted view, they beheld the abundant recompense of all the toils they had endured—they felt as if already within its hallowed palaces—with one accord, in a voice loud as the sound of many waters, they exclaimed in the words of the beautiful melody which had cheered their march, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, oh, Jerusalem"—and with renewed and redoubled speed they hastened along. It is thus that the Christian is animated and upheld in his pilgrimage, by the hope of heaven, and of all the blessedness which is laid up for him there. In the patience of this hope he holds on his way. It is to his soul an helmet of defence in the day of danger—a bright and guiding star in the dark night of sorrow and of trial—a reviving cordial to his drooping heart when sickening under a sense of his own weakness. "I had fainted," says the Psalmist, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." As he advances onward in his Christian course, with the glow of spiritual health and activity, every fresh triumph over besetting sin—every fresh act of self-denial increased—every new habit of goodness acquired—every Christian virtue striking deeper root in his character—and every known duty more faithfully, fully, and cheerfully discharged, bear him record that now is his salvation nearer than when he believed. Even when old age comes upon him, when the animal vivacity and vigour of earlier years decay, and the outward man is wasting away into the feebleness of a second childhood, his inward man is renewed day by day, for the strength of grace declines not with the strength of nature. While he measures not his pace by his own strength, but leans upon the faithfulness of Omnipotence with all the confidence that one reposes on the arm of an old and well-tried companion, the oil

of gladness is poured into his heart, and his soul becomes like the chariots of Aminadab, for he can run and not be weary, he can walk and not be faint. And when at last the eventful hour draws nigh—when the transition is to be made from time to eternity—when the soul is quivering on the eve of its departure; then, even then, the full assurance of hope throws its radiance around his dying bed; he seems to see heaven opening to receive its own, and to hear the voice of the great intercessor within the veil, “Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” He feels, after a long and fatiguing journey, as if in sight of home; his spirit becomes more elastic; he girds up the loins of his mind, strengthens the things that remain, and hastens onward to mingle with the blest, and to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. And this leads us to advert,

III. In the *third* and last place, to the blessed and glorious termination of his journey.

The blessed consummation of all the sweet and sustaining hopes which the Israelites had cherished in the course of their long, and tedious, and toilsome travels, was realized in their being privileged, every one of them, to appear before God in Zion. The final issue of the Christian’s course, rests not upon a peradventure, but upon the omnipotent power and faithfulness of God, that they may have strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them. The same hand which gave the new bias to direct the soul in its heavenward motion, will continue to quicken and secure its progress. For, says the apostle, he who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. (Philip. i. 6.) “I give unto my sheep,” says Jesus, “eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me, is greater than all, neither shall any pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” (John x. 28, 29.) One sheep will not be missing from the great Redeemer’s fold, on which he had set his mark; one child, born again of the Spirit, will not be missing from the Father’s table; one gem will not drop from Immanuel’s crown. All scripture accords its testimony to this great and delightful truth—that none whom God has effectually called, and in whom he has begun a good work, shall be ultimately lost, or cast away. It cannot be denied, that while this precious truth has been a spring of peace to the weary spirit, it has often been abused by the mere professor, who has wickedly and unwarrantably made it the apology for his carelessness, or the plea for his presumption. But the doctrine of Christian perseverance, so amply and emphatically propounded in the sacred volume, affords not a shadow of encouragement to indolence

or remissness in the work and ways of the Lord. For the privilege of perseverance is inseparably connected with the duty of perseverance. And it is only in the act of obediential perseverance, that the believer can realize the grace of perseverance, or entertain the assurance, that he shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. But while he continues to hold on his way, and to wax stronger and stronger in every Christian grace and virtue, he may be confident of this very thing, that he shall close his pilgrimage in heaven, and appear before God in Zion. There, in the open daylight of eternity, his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face. In that temple, which is reared upon the everlasting hills, and which no power shall e'er overthrow, the divine Majesty shall be unveiled, in all its uncreated brightness, to the eyes of unnumbered and adoring worshippers. For the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. There the redeemed shall be made kings and priests unto God, and they shall go no more out. They shall see the object of their worship, and of their love, face to face. They shall talk with him, as a man talketh with his friend. Present with the Lord, they shall need no emblem of his presence. Faith will be turned into vision. While they behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple, the beatific vision of God and of the Lamb will disclose fresh glories to their enraptured gaze, through the ever revolving cycles of eternal duration. But, more than this, as it is of the very nature of vision to produce assimilation, their purified souls will reflect the divine likeness, and drink in unmixed and undying delight, from beholding the divine beauty mirrored forth in themselves—"I shall behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Such is the blessed and glorious termination of the believer's journey Zionward. His path through time may have been rugged and obscure—but the beam that shines from Zion hill lighted him onward, and upward—and having reached the Mount of God, and seen the King in his beauty—and heard his voice welcoming him home—the toils and the trials of his pilgrimage are forgotten, or remembered only to swell the song in which his gratitude will seek its utterance for ever.

And now, my brethren, in drawing towards a conclusion, there is not one amongst us so recklessly indifferent to his soul's well-being, but would wish to go to heaven when he dies. But there is only one way to that blessed world—the high way of faith and holiness, of active and persevering exertion, worn by the footsteps of the flock who have travelled it in all generations. Wishing and hoping for heaven, will never carry us there. We must enter on the path that leads to it, by receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation—for light, and guidance,

and support. "I am the way," said Jesus, "he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is not entering upon a right road, that will bring a man to the end of his journey, but active and continued travelling along it. The first step is only of importance when it is followed up by successive steps. "Onward" is the watchword of the Christian, from the outset to the end of his pilgrimage. He must go from strength to strength—from virtue to virtue—from one elevation of Christian attainment to another, until he come and appear perfect before God in Zion. Brethren, is this descriptive of your course? Is your Christianity of an advancing character, like the onward and increasing career of the racer, who speeds himself towards the appointed goal? Or is it only like the forward and backward movement of the door upon its hinges, which is marked by no progress? Some of you, many years ago, set your faces Zionward; but what have you been doing since—slumbering by the way side. Where are the way-marks to which you can point as proofs of your progress? On that bright morning of your new existence, you shook off the slumber which, in the night of your foolish ignorance, weighed down the energies of the inner man—you started like a strong man rejoicing to run his race—you did run well for a season, but have you been hindered? Are you holier men now than you were then? Are your hearts more in heaven—are your affections more spiritual? Is your devotedness to God, to his service, to his cause, and to the interests of his kingdom, really increased? Do you feel more confident of your final salvation than you did then? Is it more certain now, more evident to yourselves, and more manifest to others, that you will be saved, than it was then? Or are you still loitering at the outset, and only beginning to begin? It may not be possible for the believer to ascertain his advancement in the very act of progress—but by contrasting the present with the past, he may easily determine the reality, if not the degree of his improvement. That Christianity is of little value which exhibits no evidences of the transforming and elevating influences of divine grace—which is warmed by no heartfelt aspirations after perfection, and quickened by no earnest and strenuous endeavours to attain it—which is resting satisfied with present acquirements. Brethren, look well to the state of your personal Christianity, and doubt its reality altogether, if, when you cast your eye backward on the path of your pilgrimage, you cannot trace the marks of a manifest advancement. The soul which the Spirit of God has quickened, is always carried forward; and it were to accuse this divine agent of inactivity, to suppose a subject in whom he has been operating, not strengthened in holy dispositions, and not making progress heavenward. Try yourselves by this test. A stationary religion

will never reach heaven. But there is really no such thing as a standing still in religion. He who is not gradually climbing the steep ascent to Zion, is assuredly descending its heights. He may not be sensible of his declension. He may be doing what he has been doing for years, yielding an outward homage to the forms of religion, waiting with periodical regularity upon its ordinances—and maintaining the character of an upright, decent, and harmless member of society; but a deteriorating process has been going on, indurating his conscience, chilling his affections, and leaving him less susceptible of impression from the realities of eternity. He has the hoary symptoms of decay here and there upon him, though he knoweth it not. And when the testing season comes—the time of affliction, or the day of death—his religion leaves him comfortless. Brethren, is yours a Christianity that will stand the winter blast of trial? Is it becoming strong through the word of God abiding in you? But what shall be said of those who are dwelling at ease in their tents—who are strangers to the duties of vital and practical godliness—who feel no desire, and use no endeavour to become wiser and better—who from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, and it may be from manhood to old age, have never made any conscious progress in the work of sanctification—but are taking comfort to themselves from the thought, that they are not worse than the average of those around them. All such assuredly have not a shadow of ground to hope that they shall spend eternity with God. The way which they are travelling may seem right in their own eyes for a season, but the end thereof is death. It is high time for them to think whither they are journeying. They are all going to the grave, but the grave is not the final termination of their journey. It is only a narrow pass out of time into eternity. There is a world of bliss, and a world of misery beyond it, and they who are not going from strength to strength on the way to heaven, must be rapidly travelling towards hell. And, oh! what a dreadful issue to a brief and chequered transit through a weary land! Who can dwell with devouring fire—who can endure everlasting burnings? But the path to Zion is set open before us all—and if any amongst us are desirous to walk in it, that they may find rest unto their souls, let them enter it through the wide door of Christ's mediation, and give themselves up to the guidance of his spirit, and the counsels of his word. But let them not procrastinate—delay is fraught with danger—fraught with ruin. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

SERMON LXX.

GRACE GLORIFIED IN ELECTION.

BY THE REV. JAMES STEVENSON, NEWTON-UPON-AYR.

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace."—EPHESIANS I. 5, 6.

WHETHER we consider the nature of the Divine dispensations towards mankind, or attend to the language of Scripture respecting them, we may perceive one great design which they subserve, standing forth in conspicuous manifestation, "that the lofty looks of man may be humbled, and the haughtiness of men be bowed down, and the Lord alone be exalted." That spirit of self-sufficiency and proud independence which we are all so prone to cherish, the Scriptures everywhere condemn, and labour to destroy. There can be no compromise between human pride and the Divine glory; no connection between our merits and the Lord's merciful bestowments. If God be exalted, man must be brought low. If the Divine glory is to be revealed it must shine forth in unmingled and unclouded brightness.

While this design may be traced in the dealings of Providence, it still more clearly appears in the dispensations of God with respect to man's salvation. It is here accordingly that the Lord has, in all ages, had his great controversy with our race. We are willing, it may be, to receive his providential favours with acknowledgments that we might be justly deprived of them. But, when the claim of absolute sovereignty in the matter of our salvation is advanced, our pride immediately rises up in arms, and incites us to question, or even boldly to deny, the validity of the claim. We are willing to make many concessions, rather than fall short of eternal life; but this mighty concession, of ourselves, we never will make. We are ready to give God much, nay, perhaps, most of the glory of our salvation; but that he should obtain it all—that we should be able to do nothing—that our prostration should be so low, and his exaltation so supreme—this the carnal mind cannot endure.

But this supremacy, notwithstanding, the Scriptures assert; and in few places do they so more explicitly or fully than in the chapter before.
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fore us. The apostle here ascribes salvation in all its parts to the free, unmerited grace of God. Are we elected? We have been chosen before the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." Are we redeemed? We have redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of sins, "according to the riches of his grace." Are we justified and called? We have obtained an interest in the promised inheritance, "~~that we should be to the~~ praise of his glory." Are we finally glorified? The redemption of the purchased possession which we shall then for ever inherit, is also "unto the praise of his glory." The glory of God is thus all and in all. It is the origin and the end of ~~his~~ ordinations, and their fulfilment. And while all his perfections are honoured, it is his grace which is crowned with the brightest lustre. It was magnified from everlasting in the counsels of peace, when a people were chosen in Christ to be monuments of its power. It was magnified in the eyes of the universe, by that mysterious decease which he accomplished at Jerusalem. It is still magnified from time to time, in the conversion of every sinner whom its efficacy subdues—and it will be yet more transcendently magnified, when the number of the elect is completed, and the last sinner of mankind has been regenerated and justified; when grace shall reign through righteousness unto life eternal.

The doctrine taught in our text is, that Divine grace is glorified in the Election of sinners to salvation.

It is in predestinating a people unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, that God is said to shew forth "the praise of the glory of his grace." And as this was the first, it is the most humbling and amazing of all its manifestations. No other awakens more powerfully the hostility of our unsanctified hearts. Many reject the doctrine with disdain; and even some of those, whom we have good reason to believe to be themselves chosen and faithful, are so startled by the view of the awful consequences which it involves, that they venture not expressly to acknowledge its truth. But we cannot refuse to follow, where Scripture leads the way. And if it be indeed a doctrine of the Bible, as many plain declarations, and the whole tenor of the word of God satisfactorily evince, it must be a doctrine according to godliness, and consistent with all the perfections of the Divine character.

To him who perceives the end from the beginning, all the events of time were present in the depths of eternity. But none of these events are independent of Him, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things." Their origination was owing to his efficient decree, or sovereign permission, which gave them the aspect of existing realities

in the view of his omniscience. In the silent void of an unpeopled immensity, and the unsuccessive ages of a past eternity, the universe, with all its worlds, and all their inhabitants, was presented to his mysterious contemplations. Our globe was not overlooked. Its creation was ordained. It was destined to be arrayed in beauty, and fitted for being the abode of happiness and peace. It was determined that a law at once holy, and just, and good, should regulate the actions of its rational inhabitants; and that the honour of this law should be maintained by powerful sanctions. It was determined that man, the lord of its spacious territory, should be formed in the image of his Creator, with powers sufficient to enable him to hold on in his integrity; with dispositions strongly impelling him to the practice of holiness; and with a mind qualified to appreciate and to admire the law, which was given him as the tenure of his inheritance, and the charter of his being. But though so many advantages were thus to be afforded to ensure his obedience, and so many constraining motives to be brought to bear upon his will to preserve its rectitude unswerving, it was also determined that these influences should not be altogether invincible, nor this rectitude absolutely immutable, but that man should be left to the freedom of his own will, which involved the possibility of his transgressing, while it afforded him a glorious opportunity of voluntarily honouring his Creator, magnifying his law, and gaining the reward of life promised to his holy perseverance during the period of his probation. The Lord, however, foresaw that man would not thus persevere. Not because he had resolved as to hedge in his path, by the adamant barriers of his absolute decree, as to render his perseverance impossible. As soon might God himself be tempted to evil, as that he should thus tempt man to transgress. But yet he determined, for reasons to us inscrutable, but undoubtedly holy and just, to permit him even to fall. Behold now, at this momentous point in the unfolding series of events, which our limited understandings can only successively trace, but whose first, and intermediate, and latest evolutions were all revealed to the single glance of omniscience—behold here the awfully mysterious counsels of the sovereignty of the Eternal. He foresaw that our whole race would cast off their allegiance to his authority—that his title to universal dominion would be denied—his glorious perfections dishonoured—his righteous laws spurned and disobeyed—his paternal goodness requited with the basest ingratitude—and anarchy, and wild misrule introduced into his moral administration. And all this by creatures indebted every moment to his power for their continued existence, and whose every enjoyment was a gift from the fulness of his beneficence; and whose infatuation, moreover, cast aside for ever the unspeakable delights of immortal glory, and ran the dreadful hazard,

or rather dared the appalling certainty, of a retribution of intensest and interminable woe. Might not the Lord have justly left the whole of this guilty race to fall a prey to the vengeance which they provoked? Would it have been an excess of severity to have suffered the fallen race for ever to fall; and to sink deeper and deeper in that sin which they had chosen, and that misery which it necessarily entailed? Would this have been too mighty a sacrifice to restore the harmony of the disordered universe—to confirm the holiness, and ensure the happiness of the inhabitants of its unnumbered worlds, and maintain and make manifest the glory of its Almighty governor? It is fearful for a worm of the dust, involved in the condemnation which he is bound to vindicate, to propose such questions as these. So long as we remember that we are parties concerned, our minds recoil from the thought of setting our seal to the sentence which, it may be, denounces our individual doom. But let us, with humility, or even with trembling, look into this great gulf over which we have all been suspended; and pray God that the sight may awake an unwonted energy in our souls, to bear them away from the possible experience of its horrors, and lead us more unreservedly to admire and adore the riches of sovereign grace.

I. Turn your thoughts then, in the *first* place, to the consideration of the doom of the angels that sinned.

They, like man, were created in honour; but, like man, they did not abide. They fell—and by their fall subjected themselves, in common with mankind, to the outpourings of the Divine indignation. But they were beings more illustrious than man, more honoured of God, and possessing greater capacities for serving him. Man was on earth—they were already in the heaven of heavens. And how dreadful to be precipitated from such a height of blessedness into the abyss of woe, there to be reserved in chains under darkness, unto a still more terrible doom! How sad the thought that these morning stars of creation should set in everlasting night; that angels of light should become demons of darkness! Might we not think, that if grace were ever to be manifested, it would be manifested here? That, if it were possible for Divine wrath, when once provoked, ever to be appeased, or the law, when once violated, ever to be magnified, it would have been in the case of these glorious spirits, these first-born sons of God? But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. He not only permitted them to sin, when they chose to transgress, but no means were employed to recover them from the ruins of their fall. The sentence of condemnation was not only pronounced—it was immediately carried into execution. The inheritance of eternal life on which they had entered, was, in a moment, exchanged

for the untasted bitterness of eternal death. No Saviour was provided to ransom them from ruin. No promise of restoration at the end of ten thousand ages was given to alleviate their sufferings by the far distant prospect of their coming to a close. No favoured remnant was chosen out of the multitudes of the perishing. Not even one was elected to life from among these sons of reprobation. All, all were overwhelmed with indiscriminating vengeance. Justice, unmingled justice, achieved its appalling triumphs. Mercy, in its exercise, was as yet unknown. Grace had not begun to be glorified.

Does not reason, then, pronounce, however much our feelings may at first revolt from its rigorous decision, that if fallen angels were left universally to perish, fallen men might justly have been ordained to the same unmitigated condemnation? Grounds of distinction may indeed be traced between the cases. And these may be lawfully employed in illustrating the Divine wisdom which has made us to differ. It may be said, for example, that angels did not *all* fall. After heaven had been swept of the rebellious, there still remained an unnumbered host, who swerved not from their allegiance. But when man fell, the whole race was involved in ruin. And had similar retribution been inflicted, all mankind would have been lost for ever. But this, it is evident, does not affect, in the least degree, the essential justice of a similar procedure on the part of God towards men and angels. The guilt which was partial, as respected the inhabitants of heaven, was universal as respected the inhabitants of earth. And as the penalty was commensurate with the crime in the case of the former, its infliction might, with equal justice, have been as extensive in the case of the latter. But blessed be the Lord's most holy name! while he spared not the angels that sinned, but passed them by, and "ordained them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice," he determined, from everlasting, to have compassion on sinful men—to manifest his sovereignty in seeking for objects of his love among the less illustrious band of rebels against his authority, and from them to choose a people to eternal life, and all to the praise of the glory of his grace!

II. But grace is not only glorified in the Election of sinful men, while sinning angels were passed by—its glory is farther displayed in the distinction which has been made by Divine sovereignty among sinners of mankind.

Had God, in appointing to wrath all the angels who kept not their first estate, embraced in one comprehensive decree of love the whole family of man, his grace would have received an illustrious manifestation. And who of human-kind can repress the rising wish, that, if it had

seemed good in his sight, such *had* been the extent of the Divine ordination? But here, again, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. And, while we attempt to fathom the infinity of his counsels, we are constrained to cry out—"O the depth—the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" That God has not elected all, is evident from the fact that he will not save all. For, while some, in the morning of the resurrection, shall "awake to everlasting life, some shall also awake to shame, and everlasting contempt." But the latter were originally not more unworthy than those who shall then shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever. Grace alone makes those to differ who shall then be so gloriously distinguished. And free electing grace is the origin of all those attainments which shall finally meet with so illustrious a reward. If we attempt here to measure the extent of the Divine counsels with the line of human reason, the attempt will be utterly vain. Let us pause at the brink of this abyss which can never be sounded; and, with the inspired apostle, reverently adore when we cannot comprehend. Why God elected some to salvation, while he determined to leave others to themselves, when both were equally unworthy, and consequently, in so far as strict justice was concerned, the decision might have been otherwise, we cannot tell. This is the great mystery, the central difficulty, which, if it could be solved, all would be comparatively plain. But the only solution he has deigned to give is the silencing declaration—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and whom I will I harden."

One thing we know, with infallible certainty, that all, without exception, deserved to perish; and, had our whole race been destined to be punished with everlasting destruction, as were the angels, our predecessors in crime, we could not have complained that the sentence was unjust. The wonder therefore is that any were saved; not that some are condemned. Or, shall it be said, that God, in order to be just, must either save all, or condemn all? that he must either inflict the retributions of rigorous justice, or diffuse universally the blessings of mercy? Shall man deny to God the exercise of justice and mercy combined? Or shall he be said to be a respecter of persons, because he passed over those who had no claim whatever on his goodness? "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why has thou made me thus?' Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Awful as this comparison may appear, it is strictly just. As the clay is in the hand of the potter, so were we in the hand of the Lord. Respect of persons in this case was

impossible. It has no place in acts of bounty. All were deserving of punishment. But because God exempted some from its infliction without their deserving his favour; did the remainder, in virtue of this act of his sovereignty, become entitled to a like remission on the ground of *desert*? This will not be maintained. If the former be brought in guilty before God even when chosen,' the latter cannot become less guilty, because, when others are chosen, they are passed by. They ruin themselves by sin, and God justly leaves them to perish in this self-procured ruin. Others, involved in the same condemnation, he rescues; because it is lawful for him to do what he will with his own, and to dispense his grace, which is absolutely at his disposal, as seemeth good in his sight.

Whatever men may now think of these mysterious ordinations, the time will assuredly come, when they will either acknowledge their rectitude, or be awed into silence by its overpowering manifestation. On that great day when the mystery of God shall be finished, none "shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect," and still less to the charge of Him who has elected them. But although the angels of light may look on with reverend and adoring wonder, and the angels of darkness behold with raging envy and despairing malignity, and the vessels of mercy, when their bliss is consummated, look back with amazement on that electing love, which afore prepared them unto such unspeakable glory, and the vessels of wrath, when final destruction has overtaken them, gnash with their teeth, and melt away with impotent resentment against these trophies of victorious grace—none will dare charge Jehovah with partiality or injustice, or require him to unfold the record of his eternal counsels; but of this vast assemblage of the inhabitants of worlds above and below—of beings invisible and visible—to behold him glorified in the saints whom he has chosen from everlasting—whether they behold and wonder, and perish; or behold, and wonder, and live for evermore—

"Nor men, nor angels shall presume
The reason to demand."

III. But grace is not only conspicuous in making one to differ from another, we may trace still farther its unfolding exhibitions, if we contemplate the character of the objects of this distinguishing love.

If there had been any thing in them worthy of attracting its sympathies, they would have had somewhat whereof to glory. Had an Abdiel been found among the rebellious multitude, it might have been hoped that the millions of the faithless would be spared for his sake. Nay, though all were originally sunk in the same depths of ungodliness and guilt—had Omniscience perceived that there numbered an energy in

the enfeebled powers of some of them, which would awake into mighty exertion in the days of their earthly pilgrimage; and that their hearts, polluted though they were, were yet a soil in which, unsown and uncultured by an Almighty hand, the seeds of holiness would take root, and the happy fruits of righteousness would grow—then had there been something in the creature to draw forth the Creator's regard, and grace would not have expatiated in all the fullness of its sovereignty. And accordingly, it is in this way that many attempt to reconcile the declarations of Scripture with their own self-sufficiency. They maintain that the foreseen good works of the elect were what determined the Divine choice; forgetting that holiness of heart and life is not produced by the corrupt will of man, but by the operation of God, and that if he himself be the author of holiness, which he bestows on one, while he does not bestow it on another, the choice is still absolute, and is to be traced back to the sovereign purpose of him "who worketh all things (and good works among the rest) after the counsel of his own will." So far from their being the *cause* of election, the Scriptures represent good works as the *effect* of it. It is not they which bear the root, but the root which bears them. It is declared that God "hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world," not because of our holiness, but "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Ephesians i. 4.) And again it is said, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians ii. 10.) Thus it is, that the purpose of God according to election stands, of him that calleth and not of the works of the called.

But, although good works be thus set aside as the cause of election, may not the foreknowledge of that faith and repentance from which they spring, have influenced the Divine choice? It is admitted, that these are enjoined upon us as *duties* in every part of the word of God. But they are *graces* as well as duties; and, were we left to our unaided efforts for their performance, we would never repent or believe. God alone can "give us repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Tim. ii. 25.) Faith is also said to be of the operation of God. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephes. ii. 8.) Now, why should God choose men on account of his own *gifts*? If he dispenses these according to his sovereign pleasure, there can be no merit in those who receive them to procure a love which, prior to the possible existence of that merit, had fixed on them as its objects. And, if he elect them to the infallible means of salvation, he thereby elects them to salvation itself. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts xiii. 48.) "We love him, be-

cause he first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) "No man can come unto me," says our Lord, "except it be given unto him of my Father." (John vi. 65.)

Thus it appears, that, in every aspect in which we can contemplate electing love, it is a manifestation of infinite grace. It prostrates the sinner in the dust, and sets Jehovah upon the throne. It not only excludes all merit on the part of man from contributing to originate it, but renders this an impossible supposition—a direct contradiction. When Paul has assured the Romans that there was a faithful remnant of the Jewish nation "according to the election of grace," he immediately adds, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." (Rom. xi. 6.) He repels the very idea of associating works in any degree with the grace of God. Either the entire glory of salvation must be the Lord's, or the whole of it must be man's. Man must either be altogether his own saviour, or acknowledge that, in the Lord alone, he has righteousness, and strength, and salvation.

And what child of God can hesitate which of these alternatives to choose? Who that has tasted that the Lord is gracious, can feel reluctant to confess and declare, "Not unto me, not unto me, but unto the name of the Lord be all the glory. He called me out of darkness into marvellous light—called me when my conscience was seared, my heart was hardened, and my whole soul filled with enmity against him and his law. And in thus saving and calling me with a holy calling, it was not according to my works, but according to his own purpose and grace in Christ Jesus before the world began. His calling was only the accomplishment of an eternal decree, by which he predestinated me to be conformed to the image of his Son. He loved me with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving-kindness has he drawn me. He regarded me with favour before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the world. He then beheld me lying in wickedness with a whole world of apostates. And while the angels who had surrounded his throne were passed by, and many of my fellows not more unworthy than I am were left to harden themselves in impenitence, he singled out me from the multitudes of the fallen as a vessel of mercy to make known the riches of his glory. He separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace. And his grace bestowed on me has not been in vain. By this grace of God I am what I am. And though it doth not yet appear what I shall be, I know that he who hath given me grace will afterward receive me to glory."

You may learn from this subject, .

1. How deep-laid the foundations of the gospel are in the grace of God. As yet we have only contemplated the foundation. But the nature of the entire superstructure reared upon it is the same. Grace begins, carries on, and completes the mighty plan; and when the head-stone of the glorious temple is brought forth, it will be with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.

2. Beware of abusing the important but mysterious doctrine to which your attention has now been called.

It has not been our object to advance all the arguments that may be urged in its defence, or to refute the various objections with which it has been assailed. We have sought rather to follow out the design of the text, by showing how it conduces to the praise of the glory of Divine grace. We know well that there are some who wrest this doctrine, as they do also the other doctrines of Scripture, to their own destruction. But if the doctrines are, indeed, according to godliness, on them alone must rest the heavy responsibility. It is easy, by proud disputations and presumptuous speculations respecting the deep things of God, to bewilder the mind, and involve it in hopeless perplexity. The Scripture we may safely follow; but when it ceases to lead, let us not venture forward alone. It contains no record of the number of God's elect. Their names are written, not in earth, but in heaven; not in the open book of revelation, but in the Lamb's book of life. And say not—Who then shall ascend into heaven to read the decisions of the counsels of eternity? Or who shall descend into the deep to explore the secrets of his will? The word is nigh you, even in your mouth if you confess, and in your heart if you believe the truth. We know not what God has decreed, but we know what he has revealed. And, in accordance with his revealed declarations, we proclaim, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." We thus address not a few favoured individuals, but all without exception. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." "Unto you, O men, we call, and our voice is to the sons of men." "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Let no one object that such unlimited invitations are inconsistent with the doctrine of absolute decrees. God deems them not inconsistent. If we cannot perceive their consistency, we may safely leave it to him to vindicate the harmony of all the parts of his moral administration. "The secret things belong unto the Lord. The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children." Let us not intrude into those things which he claims as peculiarly his own; but let us hold fast those which he has made over to ourselves. Let us humbly remind him of

his promises, and entreat that he would do as he has said. He has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And if ye ask, and do not receive; if ye seek, and cannot find; then you may be discouraged, and plead that you are opposed by the immutability of his counsel; but not *till* then. God cannot deceive his creatures. He cannot deny himself. There are two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, by which you may have strong consolation if you will flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you. The husbandman refuses not to sow his seed, because he is himself unable to make it grow. He waits not till he is assured that a plenteous harvest has been decreed as the reward of his labours; but casts the precious grain into the earth, and, in due time, God gives the increase. Think not that the Divine decree interposes insurmountable obstacles in your path. This is to interfere with those secret things which belong unto the Lord. Nay, without his decree, your salvation had been impossible. But now the gates of life are thrown open. No inexorable cherubim forbid your approach. No flaming sword gleams with the lightning of vengeance. "The spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Every individual within these walls may obtain this salvation if he will. Have mercy upon your own souls, and the Lord will have mercy on them. Enter one, enter all of you, and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Nor fear that the many mansions which he has prepared will be overfilled. Still his servants declare there is room. And still he commands them to compel other wanderers to come in. Be assured, then, that if ye still remain without, and walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and thus go down to the chambers of death—although you may now plead, in the pride and the perverseness of your heart, that God is destroying you—God will at last be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he condemns you. At the resurrection of your body there will also be the resurrection of a faithful witness in your bosom, whose still small voice, now unheard, will then be the echo of the thunder—the voice of the Lord. Whatever you may plead, this will not find place among your pleas. For, when the heavens above you are passing away for ever from your view—and the earth beneath your feet is wrapt in the flames of the final conflagration—and the saints are ascending to the regions of glory—and the wicked are sinking down in the abyss of everlasting ruin—when your spirit is thus oppressed with the power of God's anger, and agonizing with a withering sense of feebleness, and forlornness, and despair—it will be the crowning aggravation of all these unutterable woes, that they are not the ar-

bitrary infliction of your omnipotent Judge, but the self-procured misery of one who is conscious in himself that he is his own destroyer.

3. Finally, let the people of God improve this humbling, but encouraging doctrine for the great ends for which it has been revealed.

Remember, dear brethren, that if God has chosen you to eternal life, it was not only that his grace might be glorified in you, but by you. He will obtain a revenue of glory from the punishment of the impenitent, as well as from the salvation of the redeemed. But while he makes the wrath of the wicked to praise him, though meant for his dishonour, he designs that the people whom he has formed for himself should voluntarily and delightfully show forth his praise. It is thus only you can have any evidence that you are elected of God. If you have been from the beginning chosen to salvation, it must be through sanctification of the spirit. It is thus also you can effectually refute that most irrational of all objections to this doctrine, that it leads to licentiousness. Let it ever be remembered, that election to salvation, apart from election to holiness, is impossible. If it has been decreed that you shall enter in through the gates into the celestial city, it has no less certainly been decreed that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." If the foundation of God standeth sure, it has a double seal for its security. Not merely "the Lord knoweth them that are his;" but "let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Were it possible that the latter could be obliterated, then would it be possible that even the purpose of God according to election might fail. Holiness is the pillar of his throne—righteousness is the apparel of his saints.

"Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour."

SERMON LXXI.

DANGER OF FOLLOWING JESUS AFAR OFF.

BY THE REV. THOMAS STARK, LANARK.

"But Peter followed him afar off unto the High Priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants to see the end."—MATTHEW xxvi. 58.

THE affection which individuals bear to each other increases as the moment of separation approaches; or, at least, the workings of affection become more powerful, and its existence is more evident, both to themselves and to others. You may have stood, perhaps, beside a vessel, which was just leaving the port for a distant land, and which was bearing off some of the members of a household, to seek a home among strangers; and you may have seen, that, as the mariners were hoisting the sails, and hurrying to leave the harbour, there were persons who were about to separate, and perhaps for ever, in this world, and whose weeping eyes, and whose heaving bosoms, indicated that a fearful struggle was going on within, and that the anguish which they feel at separation was convulsing their whole frame. The violent shock which the heart in such circumstances sustains, is perhaps the severest pang that human nature can endure. It was well exemplified in the feelings of the elders of the Ephesian church, when the apostle of the Gentiles was about to leave them for the last time. He sent for them to come to Miletus, and visit him. And when they came, he exhorted them to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, for they would see his face no more. They wept when they thought that he by whose ministry they had been converted, and by whose instrumentality they had been built up in holiness, was about to leave them. They could have endured that he should go to other cities for a season, and preach the gospel there also. They could have endured that he should go up to Jerusalem, and comfort the brethren there. The time of his absence might be long, and a weary season it might be to them. They might long for his return, and hail it with joy, as the captive hails his return to his native land. But the announcement that they should see his face no more, fell on their hearts with a weight of agony, such as the criminal feels when the verdict of *guilty* is pronounced. "They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck
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and kissed him: sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."

And it was true of the disciples, that when Jesus informed them he was about to leave them, and return to his Father, their hearts were filled with sorrow. They did not anticipate that he would leave them in a sinful world, to war with adversaries, as with beasts of prey. They expected he would remain as their leader; and would speedily seat himself on the throne of David in Jerusalem, and assume the reins of government over the nations. And when they learned from his own lips, that instead of acclamations of homage, there would be shouts of derision and contempt—instead of the splendour of a king, there would be the degradation of a criminal—instead of the luxury of a palace, there would be the agony of crucifixion, their hearts were torn with grief. Their cheering ideas of earthly magnificence had vanished—their hopes of earthly glory were crushed—they bowed their heads in agony, and wept in all the bitterness of despair. Yet they resolved to continue with their Master in his troubles. They pledged themselves to remain faithful, whatever might befall him. And Peter, above all the others, avowed his determination to share his Master's fortunes, and to adhere to him through good report, and through bad report. "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." And what was the result of all these solemn pledges? When Jesus fell into the hands of his enemies, "Peter followed him afar off, unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end."

I propose, depending on God's blessing, in the following observations on this incident in the history of the Apostle, to consider,

I. What induced the Apostle to follow Jesus AFAR OFF.

II. Who were the companions with whom he sat down; and his danger in doing so.

III. What was his state of mind when he went in; and how this exposed him to the danger of falling under temptation.

I. What induced the Apostle to follow Jesus AFAR OFF?

It was evidently fear—fear of men—fear of the evil which might fall upon himself. He saw that Jesus was seized as a malefactor—that he was hurried away in the rough and barbarous grasp of the officers and soldiers—that he would soon be placed before the tribunal of the priests, and put on trial for his life. And he was well aware of the enmity which they bore him—and that, if by any means they could prevail on the Roman governor to pronounce sentence of death upon him ,

they would not hesitate to deliver him up to the ignominious death of the cross. And he appears to have reasoned with himself—"Of what benefit can I be to him now, when he has fallen into the hands of enemies so malignant and so powerful as they? Am I able to deliver him? What can I avail against so many? Of what use will it be, though I avow myself to be a friend, and declare that I know he is guilty of nothing worthy of death? I may involve myself in the same condemnation, but I never can deliver him. I may also be nailed with him to the accursed tree, but that will never relieve his pangs, or ease him in a dying hour. I will conceal my connection with him for a time at least. That will not injure him. And why should I involve myself causelessly in a snare?" "Skin for skin," said Satan, "yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." And though he be the father of lies, he doubtless spake truth on this occasion. The fear of death induced the apostle to follow afar off. But was that the fulfilment of his promise which he had made to his Master? Was that the adherence which might be expected from the pledge—though I should die with thee, I will never deny thee? What was the attachment of Peter to his Master, when compared with the affection which the Moabitess Ruth bare to her mother-in-law? The zeal and the love of this daughter of the heathen may well put to shame the disciples of Jesus. When Naomi was about to return to Bethlehem-Judah, she implored the affectionate Ruth to leave her, and to go back to her kindred, for nothing but hardship and misery awaited her, if she persisted in going to Judea. And truly the prospect was gloomy in the extreme. Ruth was going to dwell in a land of strangers. She was a daughter of the heathen, and the daughters of Israel would despise her, and stand aloof from her. She had not a friend but Naomi, and Naomi was too feeble to protect her, and too poor to shelter her. And if Naomi were removed, there would not be a creature to speak to her a word of comfort. If she returned to her kindred, she might spend her days in happiness, and close her eyes in peace. And Naomi said unto her, "it grieveth me for your sake; return to your mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." But Ruth's was a love which no danger could shake, and no terror could move; and she ended the matter by declaring, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and thy God, my God; where thou diest, will I die; and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Oh, that the love of disciples to their Master bore some resemblance to this; then the people of God, congregated in a united band, would never stray from the captain of their salvation; then

would temptations be spread before them in vain; then would their path be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day!

And yet the apostle had some affection for his Master. He followed him, although at a distance. He never intended to abandon the cause of Jesus altogether. He never doubted that Jesus was the Messiah. But here was his sin—he followed *afar off*. He attempted to combine two things which were totally incompatible—an attachment to Jesus, and the favour of the world. Attempts have often been made to reconcile them, but such attempts never have been successful and never will be. “No servant can serve two masters; either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” And such attempts are dangerous in the highest degree, and will issue in the utter discomfiture of those who make them. How many of the six hundred thousand men able to bear arms, who came up out of Egypt with Moses, entered into the land of Canaan? Only two. Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. And what, suppose ye, could be the reason, that these two, and only these, were so highly favoured? The reason is expressly given by the sacred historian—and let it be engraved in your hearts, and kept in remembrance, and acted on, when upon any occasion ye are tempted to follow Jesus *afar off*—they followed the Lord fully—and them he brought into the land. When the others were weeping and hesitating, and mourning over the dangers, and resolving to turn back into Egypt, Caleb and Joshua remained firm in their adherence to the Lord; and while the others looked on them as madmen, who would rush recklessly on danger, with no other ground of confidence than simply that the Lord had promised to be with them, they stood firm and unmoved, in the midst of all the turmoil, and followed the Lord fully—and they, and they alone were safe, while all the others were destroyed. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, whosoever runneth into it will be safe. The promise of the Lord is a city of refuge, whosoever takes shelter therein will be protected from the sword of the avenger. The way of the Lord is one of security, whosoever follows it fully will walk in peace. And such has been the experience of the people of God in every age. When Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, Sanballat, and Geshem, and others of his enemies, laid plots for his life. They sent him an invitation to come, and hold a conference with them in some of the villages of the plains of Ono. But he answered, I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down. They sent to him again and again, resolved to entice him from the work, but they could not succeed. When all their

plans had failed, they attempted to overcome him, by accusing him of rebelling against the king. They supposed that he would listen to ensnaring advice, and go into the temple and shut himself in, lest he should be slain. But when urged to do so, he replied, "Should such a man as I flee? Who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." The firmness which he exhibited, overawed his enemies. They felt it was vain to contend with him, unless they did so by open force. He followed the Lord fully. He adhered closely to the commands which the Lord had given him, and he was successful. No one has ever failed, and no one can ever fail, who has the Lord on his side. Hardships he may endure—persecution he may undergo—those in his own household may be his enemies. But the Lord will bring him off more than conqueror. And bear in mind, that the Lord is ever on the side of all who follow him fully.

But how was it, that Peter who, after all, was zealously attached to Jesus, and who, notwithstanding his mournful face, was a faithful apostle, was permitted, in Providence, to follow Jesus *afar off*? How was it, that his Master, who loved his disciples even to the end, should allow the apostle thus to fall into the snare of attempting to combine things which are absolutely irreconcilable? Some good purpose, unquestionably, can be assigned for this. It was because he was confident in his own strength, and supposed that, by a zealous resolution of his own, without any help from above, he could remain faithful to his Master. Watch and pray, said Jesus, lest ye enter into temptation. But they neither watched nor prayed. They neither saw the danger approaching, nor did they pray the Lord to strengthen them, when the danger arrived. They pledged themselves, and doubtless with the sincerest intention of redeeming their pledge, that they would remain steadfast with Jesus, both to prison and to death. And Peter, above all, pledged himself that he would never deny Jesus. These my companions may abandon you (for so much is conveyed in his words to Jesus), but I never will. You may trust in my resolution, whatever shall befall. The element of his weakness, however, was this, that his resolution was adopted, and intended to be acted on, not in the help of the Lord, but in his own strength. And he soon felt, that human strength is but weakness, and that human resolution resting on no better ground than this, is feeble as a broken reed. I implore you to remember this, that however strongly resolved you be, and however sincere your purposes, all will be worthless, if you trust to yourselves. It is good to resolve to follow the Lord. It is good to resolve to follow the Lord fully—but more is wanted. Your feet must rest on the Rock of Ages, and then, and then only, shall your mountain stand strong, and you shall never be moved. It was a severe

and a sorrowful lesson which was thus read to the apostles, but it was most salutary in its influence, and one which they never forgot. They remembered their backsliding, and whence it arose. And when, in after days, they were engaged in the arduous work of preaching the gospel, and met with many temptations and many enemies, they trusted in the Lord for the gaining of the victory, and they were not disappointed. "I can do all things," says the apostle of the Gentiles, but he said so, not in the spirit of the apostles, in the garden of Gethsemane—for he adds, "through God that strengthens me." And here he spake the truth; through God he wrought miracles—through God he trampled Satan under his feet—through God he converted souls—through God he wore the crown of glory—and through God he is now before the throne. Nay, so deep was the impression made on the minds of the apostles, that it was through God, and Him only, that they could achieve any work, that Paul says, "I glory in mine infirmities." Not that infirmities are a ground of glorying in themselves; but because these were perpetually reminding them of their weakness—of the source of their strength—and of the manner in which they could fight the good fight of faith—and were thus the means of sending them continually to a throne of grace; so they were blessings indeed. Happy is the man to whose mind a sense of his weakness is ever present, and blessed are they who, being convinced of their weakness, trust always in the Lord. Nothing is too hard for them. Truly they can do all things.

II. Who were the companions with whom the apostle sat down; and what was his danger in doing so? They were the servants of the high priest, and the servants of those wicked men who were then sitting in judgment upon Jesus. And what manner of people would they be? Unquestionably they shared with their masters, in the utmost hostility to the Messiah, and in rejoicing that he was now their captive. A number of them were most probably the individuals who had apprehended the blessed Jesus in the garden, and dragged him like a felon into the judgment hall. And while Jesus stood at the bar, care worn and exhausted, and bearing with heavenly meekness the reproaches which were cast upon him, these ungodly servants would also scoff at his miseries, and heap obloquy on his blessed head. And there was Peter—the man who had so recently declared, "though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee"—there he was—seated in the midst of them—listening to their ribaldry and blasphemy, but never uttering a word in defence of Jesus. We might have expected that his indignation would have been uncontrollable, when he heard the accusations which he knew to be false, and the reproaches which he knew to be undeserved, brought against the

Messiah. We might have expected that he would arise in anger from his seat, and plant himself side by side with his Master, and declare with an energy which would command attention, that he knew their proceedings to be a mockery, and their words to be false. He might have declared, I have been his constant companion from the commencement of his ministry until now—I have been with him in public—I have been with him in private—I have heard his words—I have seen his actions—I know that all has been pure, and all has been holy—and although you should involve me in the same condemnation with him, I will attest with my dying breath, that he is most unjustly accused, and that, if you proceed against him, you must be accounted as murderers. All this we might have expected, and all this Peter was pledged to perform. But there was the apostle, shrinking from public gaze, in the midst of the servants—there was he who had once drawn his sword in defence of Jesus, and who had struck with fury at the oppressors, now overawed by the wicked, and mute with fear. The power of Jesus appeared to be on the wane—the star of his glory had begun to pale—his cause was now dangerous—and woe to the man who avowed himself an adherent. How many will profess to follow Jesus when the rulers are on his side, and when the badge of Christianity is a passport to influence and riches, and the favour of the great and the noble; but who will attempt in a moment to conceal themselves among the ungodly, and listen without one word of defence to the vilest aspersions that may be thrown on him, and on his cause, so soon as the rulers are against him! Nay, how many are there, who are not content with simply huddling themselves up in a corner along with the base and the vile, and listening to their scoffs and their scorn; but will stand up openly, and be the most abusive and foul-mouthed of all the party to which they have gone over! None are so virulent as the apostate. They are the Shimeis against the cause of truth, when they have once abandoned it. They come out, and they curse as they come, and throw stones, and cast dust, and cry—“Come out, come out, ye bloody men, and ye men of Belial!” Who can tell to what depths of iniquity a person may go, who, when Jesus is placed at the bar, will turn his back upon him, and herd among his enemies?

But what could be expected even from the Apostle Peter, when he had chosen such a companionship? “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” His ears might be pained at first by the words which he heard. His soul might be vexed at first, by the harshness and the injustice of the language around him. But, as he became accustomed to it, he yielded to all its influence, and in order to convince those who accused him that he was not a disciple, he denied with oaths and curses that he knew the man. No man becomes thoroughly wicked at once,

And there was a gradual descent in the fall of the apostle. He was, first of all, alarmed, and consulted his safety by flight; then he followed Jesus, but followed him afar off; then he entered into the palace; then he sat down among the servants; then he listened without rebuke to their scoffs against Jesus; then he denied that he was a disciple; then, to crown all, he denied with oaths and with curses. One step in sin led him to another; and deep was the ditch, and filthy the mire, into which he plunged at last. Oh, could the apostle but have seen how fearful would be his fall, he would have said with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"—and yet he was forewarned, and yet he fell! Make but one step into evil, and who can tell where you will end? You have a beautiful description of the descending steps of the series, in the commencement of the Psalms. He walks in the counsel of the *ungodly*. It is not the open transgressor with whom he associates at first. That would be a step too large, and too palpable, to take at once. He joins himself to the ungodly—a man whose conduct outwardly may be correct, but whose heart is void of all religion. And even then the intercourse is not very intimate—he merely *walks* in the counsel of the ungodly—a casual word with him only, as each may be engaged in his daily business. But the matter does not end there. He then stands in the way of *sinners*. His companions now are not merely void of religion, they are sinners—persons immoral, and licentious. And the companionship is much more intimate—he *stands* in the way of sinners—he comes to the corner of streets—he waits in the place of rendezvous—and he enters into conference with persons in whose way even he would not once have walked. And yet there is a lower deep. He sits now in the seat of the *scornful*. His companions are not merely immoral, they are profane and blasphemous—they have cast off all fear of God—they scoff at the sacred truths of religion, and denounce them as idle tales. And the companionship is still more intimate. He *sits* in the seat of the scornful—he goes into the house of the scoffer—he is accepted as a bosom friend—he is received into the closest intimacy, and his degradation is complete. There is a twofold descent in the description of the Psalmist—his companions advance a degree in wickedness—ungodly—sinners—scornful. And his intercourse advances in intimacy—walks—stands—sits. Such is the progress of the wicked. It is like the descent of a stone which is launched from the top of a mountain,—it rolls away gently at the outset, but as it descends it gathers way, and bounds faster and faster, and flies with a greater and greater impetus, until it plunges into the marsh below, and bury itself deep in the mire. The commencement of sin is like the letting out of waters; the opening is small—the stream is feeble—and the outlet could easily be stopped; but as the

waters flow, the opening is enlarged—the embankment is undermined—it shakes, and yields, and the deluge rolls with resistless violence onwards, sweeps away every thing in its course, and leaves in its track desolation and ruin. Turn away at the first movement of temptation. Touch not, taste not, handle not. Avoid the sinner as you would avoid a serpent. Flee from the ungodly as you would flee from a man who is infected with the plague. Your safety lies in this, that you follow the Lord fully.

III. What was the apostle's state of mind, when he went into the high priest's palace; and how did this expose him to the danger of falling under temptation? He went in to *see* the end. He was evidently not fully resolved in what manner he would act. His intention appears to have been, to ascertain what accusations were brought against Jesus, and what defence he would make; to ascertain what was the disposition of the judges, and then to act accordingly. And, unquestionably, this is a state of mind in which he was fitted to be moved about with every new aspect of the scene, and to be led astray by temptation. He might entertain the idea, perhaps, that Jesus would put forth his omnipotence, and deliver himself out of their hands. He had seen on various occasions the miracles which were performed. He had seen, that when the people of Nazareth attempted to drive the Messiah to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, and to cast him down headlong, he had passed unharmed through the midst of them, and gone his way. He had seen, that when the officers and soldiers attempted to seize Jesus in the garden, he spake to them, and they ran backwards, and fell to the ground. And he knew that if Jesus was willing, he could easily extricate himself out of all their toils, and set their anger at defiance. And as all the apostles believed that their Master would occupy the throne of David—the earthly throne in Jerusalem—so he might suppose that now when he was driven to extremity, he would at once avow himself the King of the Jews, and by the demonstration of some tremendous act of authority, would scatter his accusers and his judges, and stand forth in the midst of them, as the long-promised, and undoubted deliverer of Israel. And he might go into the judgment-hall, to watch and to *see* what the end would be; and, if the season for the developement of his Master's glory and majesty had not arrived, to hide himself among the servants; and, if the long-wished-for period had come, to avow himself as a disciple, and to be the first to hail his Master with joyful acclamations. Now, what could be expected from such a state of mind? Why, that the feeblest temptation would overcome him, and that the smallest matter would cause him to stumble and fall. And so, indeed, it

was. A certain maid saw him as he sat by the fire, and said, This man also was with him ; and he denied, and said, I know him not. Where now was his resolution ? There was nothing but uncertainty. Where was now his faith ? There was nothing but doubt and hesitation. This is the state of mind in which Satan wishes believers to be, and in which, he is well assured, he will gain a victory over them. "Take unto you," says the apostle, "the shield of faith, whereby you shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." But Peter had left his shield in the garden of Gethsemane, and he sat naked and defenceless before his great adversary, and the first dart, however weak its fiery influence would be, could not fail to enter into his heart, and kindle his simple thoughts into a flame. Is it surprising that the apostle should have fallen ? Nay, it would have been surprising indeed if he had escaped.

Now, this was, for the moment, the attachment of the apostle to his Master,—an attachment which depended wholly on circumstances for the manner in which it would show itself—an attachment which might end in confessing him openly, as well as in denying him—an attachment, however, which could so regulate itself, as to secure, if possible, his own safety. But is that the attachment which Jesus requires ? Hear his own words, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven : But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Jesus will not accept a heart whose affections are divided. "I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven images." He will not consent to dwell in a temple, the holy place of which is occupied by another, and shared with another. You must either give him your affections solely and exclusively, or he will not accept them. And, indeed, what is the attachment worth of a person who hesitates to whom he will give it, and who delays to give it to any, until he learn from the course of events what party will be prosperous ? Would men be satisfied with such attachment as this ? Would any person, struggling with a rival for superiority, accept it, or prize it as of any value ? You have a powerful exemplification of the estimate which a man of the world would put upon it, in the history of the late Emperor of France. When it was known that he had escaped from Elba, and was attempting to re-instate himself on the throne, a Prince of the house of Bourbon hastened to Lyons, to secure the loyalty of the soldiers, and obstruct the progress of the invader. The accounts which were given of the smallness and the weakness of the invading armament, led the inhabitants to believe that the attempt to accomplish another Revolution would miserably fail ; and many of the young men of the principal families formed themselves

into a guard of honour, for the immediate protection of the Prince. But as the Emperor advanced, and his adherents increased, and danger stared them in the face, their attachment to the King began to waver, and they all, with the exception of one individual, deserted the Prince, and prepared to offer their services to his enemy. When the Emperor arrived, they presented themselves before him, and entreated that they might be permitted to become his personal escort. And how did he value their offer? "Your conduct to the Prince," said he, "assures me what I might expect from you, were I to sustain a reverse of fortune." He could not fail to perceive that their offer of service was altogether worthless, that it arose from his prosperity, and that, if the time should come when his banner would be laid in the dust, they would speedily transfer their aid to the victor. And well he knew that such attachment was not to be depended on. He dismissed them from his presence with the deepest contempt; and so great was his respect for the faithfulness of the only one among all the faithless, that he transmitted the cross of the legion of honour to him who had been steadfast to the Prince, even though he was the only one who resolved to oppose his progress. And will the Lord be satisfied with that which man despises? Will the Lord accept an allegiance which man would reject with contempt? Will vacillation prove a degradation in the eyes of man, and be honourable in the sight of God? Deceive not yourselves, God is not mocked. Jesus will deny such before his Father's face.

And now, in conclusion, let all learn wisdom from the fall of the apostle. Resolve to follow the Lord fully. Resolve to do so, in the strength of the Lord, and then you will never fail. Let no temptation draw you aside, by a single hairbreadth from the path of rectitude, and the Lord will bless you and prosper your way. What a beautiful instance of faithfulness, and of the good which resulted from it, have you in the history of the prophet Daniel. A decree was signed and sealed, that if any man, for the space of thirty days, should ask a petition from either God or man, unless from the King, he should be cast into the den of lions. Here was a trying position. The prophet could not obey it, but he might easily have evaded it. He might have gone to a distant part of the empire, where he had freedom to present his prayers to God, unseen and unknown to his enemies, until the thirty days were past. And as he was the chief of all the princes, he might have done so, while none might venture to question him on what business he went. Or, if unwilling to encounter the fatigues of a journey in his old age, he might have retired into a secret chamber of his house, and there, with no human eye to witness his devotions, he might have prayed to the Lord as heretofore. And as he was the chief of all the princes, which of them woul

venture to intrude on his privacy? How easily could an argument in his case have been constructed, to show, to the satisfaction of many, that he might neither obey the decree, nor yet incur the penalty? But the question in the mind of the prophet was this, Would that beto follow the Lord fully? Undoubtedly it would not. And hence he rejected all such shameful compromises, and resolved to follow the Lord fully. And what was the result? He was delivered from the lions. And that was the smallest part of it. The heart of the King was so impressed by the miracle wrought, that he issued a decree that all men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. And this faithfulness of the prophet was the principal means, in the providence of God, for bringing about the restoration of the captivity. What had been the result, if the prophet had been anxious to combine attachment to the God of Abraham, with a plan to consult his own safety? He had been faithless. The Hebrews, carried away by his dissimulation, had been faithless also, and the cause of truth had been wounded in the house of its friends. Oh, remember that your safety lies in the blessing of the living God; and never, by word or deed, be guilty of any thing which would forfeit this, however great the advantage which you may appear to attain. In any case of difficulty or of doubt, be not satisfied with plausibilities only. Put to yourselves the question, What is the way in which I CAN FOLLOW THE LORD FULLY? And then, although a fiery furnace, or a den of lions should be before you, the Lord will be your friend, and will bring you off more than conquerors.

SERMON LXXII.

THE ADVENT OF THE LORD USHERED IN AMIDST THE SHAKINGS
OF THE NATIONS.

BY THE REV. J. G. LORIMER, GLASGOW.

"And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts."—HAGGAI II. 7.

THOUGH heaven be God's throne and earth his footstool, and all space his temple, yet, in condescension to human weakness, he who fills immensity deigns to manifest himself in a temple built by human hands; and he who hears unceasingly the praises of eternity, stoops to receive the worship which is offered within its walls. Accordingly, after the people of Israel were fully established in the promised land, preparations were made for building a house for the service of God; and that it might not partake of the idolatrous fancies to which the Israelites were addicted, God himself was pleased to draw its plan or pattern—a pattern which was strictly observed in the construction; and that it might correspond with and be adapted to the imperfect views then existing, and might leave no excuse for frequenting the temples of idolatry, it was built in great outward magnificence, sufficient to overawe and impress the least instructed mind. What added, however, principally to its splendour was the glorious symbol of the Divine presence which had attended the nation as a guide and protector in their wanderings in the desert, and which now took up its residence in the most sacred part of the temple. For four hundred years this building of Solomon and its furniture were the glory of the land, and the admiration of foreigners; but dear as the temple doubtless was in God's eye, so offensive is sin to him, that when his people rebelled, he suffered it to be repeatedly polluted and plundered, till it was finally burnt down, and they were carried into captivity.

Here, however, God did not leave them. As soon as the purposes of his providence in their affliction were fulfilled, they were mercifully restored to their own land and encouraged to rebuild the temple, the value of which their captivity had taught them better to prize. Disappointed, however, at the difficulties with which they were assailed from without, and the comparative meanness of the structure to which

their poverty, after all their efforts, restricted them, many were down-cast and mourned. To animate their hopes, and invigorate their labours, the words of the text were proclaimed by the Prophet Haggai, and what can be considered more encouraging? He assures them, on the authority of the Lord of Hosts, that poor as the present building might seem, when contrasted with its predecessor, they were not to give up the undertaking in despair, for God would fill it with a glory far greater than that at the remembrance of which the aged now lamented and wept.

To many this must have sounded as a strange and improbable statement. What! some of them might exclaim, "Is there anything that we indigent exiles can accomplish in a land so desolate as this, which may compare with what was achieved by the greatest of our monarchs in the highest prosperity, with the treasures collected by his father, and the exhaustless offerings of foreigners at his command? Even supposing we could surmount all our disadvantages, and rear as beautiful a structure, yet did not our eyes behold the radiant symbol of a present Deity slowly and reluctantly depart from our temple? Did we not see it linger over the city, and then remove to the Mount of Olives, and at length vanish from our sight? And what has become of the ark of the covenant and its commandments of stone, engraved by the finger of God? and where is the oracle of the High Priest's breastplate? and who shall rekindle that fire of heaven, which has now been extinguished these seventy years? We have nothing which can bring back these precious but long lost peculiarities? We see no symptom of their probable return. Surely the prophet seeks to move by hopes which shall mock and disappoint. He speaks of a glory greater than the temple of Solomon; and yet, in the whole range of our vision and of probability, we behold nothing which can bear even a distant comparison with its claims." "True. But what the prophet declares is a divine prediction, and will, in the appointed time, receive its fulfilment—only when accomplished it will be in a form far different from what is expected. It will not be by any splendour of architecture or richness of ornament, by cedar, or silver, or gold. The symbol of the Divine presence has irrevocably gone—the ark shall never be restored, and the fire of the sacrifice shall never again be lighted at the altar of heaven. Still is the glory to come far greater than the glory which is past. And how? Because He will personally appear in the building, of whom the temple and all its parts and services are but feeble shadows. The God of the temple shall come, and all earthly splendour shall be lost in the radiance of his glory. "And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill all this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The subject naturally divides itself into three parts:—1st, A great person, the Desire of all nations, shall come; 2d, the manner or preparation of his coming—"I will shake all nations;" 3d, the consequence of his coming—"I will fill this house with glory." We shall now, depending on God's blessing, attend to these points in their order.

I. There is a great person who shall come. There was no human probability that this part of the prophecy would be fulfilled. Though it might not be difficult to hazard the conjecture that an individual would arise at some future period whose character would render him acceptable to a particular class of persons, yet it seems very unlikely that a person should appear who would unite in himself properties so remarkable as to draw forth the desires of all nations.

Who, then, is the desired object? Obviously it can be none else than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It can be no philosopher, no statesman, no warrior; for though a whole nation were to concur in desiring any one of these, yet other nations would dread their power or be envious of their reputation? But how may Christ be said to be the Desire of all nations? Though the universality of the blessings of his salvation, and their singular property of not impoverishing any by their extension to all, should certainly recommend the Saviour to the regard of all nations, yet, on looking at a religious map of the globe, how small a space is allotted to the servants of Christ? Was then the ancient history of the church widely different from the modern? Was there once a period when all earnestly longed for that very Saviour whom they now hate, or neglect, or disregard? No. Human nature has ever been the same; but Christ may be said to be the desire of all nations, because there were many in all nations before his coming who, taught by the Spirit of God to feel their need of a Saviour and their own inability to provide one, really desired his appearance as a spiritual deliverer.

But Christ may literally be said to be the Desire of all nations, inasmuch as he was the object of their earnest *expectation*. For many years before his coming he was diligently looked for by multitudes who derived no spiritual advantage from him. The intimations of prophecy had been so various—so minute—so strong, that the whole world confidently expected his appearance—so confidently, that every unusual event was interpreted as a sign of his coming, and impostors availed themselves of the prevailing belief to set themselves forth as the expected Deliverer. The great majority, indeed, mistook his character and office, but none doubted his coming, all rejoiced in the anticipation of his birth. So far, then, as a universal expectation goes, Christ may, with the

utmost propriety and truth, be said to be the Desire of all nations. Never was expectation so general and so deep.

But of Christ it may be affirmed that He is the desire of all nations, because to all he was, and is, most *desirable*. However little his spiritual character may be recognised, though hateful to every unrenewed mind, still never was a person so truly worthy of the desires both of individuals and of nations. Who can for a moment compare with him in excellency? Whether we regard time or eternity, no property does he need to render him perfectly worthy of the esteem and love of all. He is fairer than the sons of men. If we do not perceive his glory, it is only because we are blind, or look away to other objects.

We have then a clear prediction that the Desire of the nations should come to his temple. Was this fulfilled? It was—like all the declarations of God, to the very letter. Christ not only appeared, and that at Jerusalem, he appeared at the *temple*. *There*, when an infant, the aged saints, Simeon and Anna, received and bestowed upon him their dying benediction. *There* he was at twelve years of age about his Father's business. *There* he was found instructing the Jewish doctors, when amissing from the company of his kinsfolk. *There*, many of his miracles were wrought, and many of his instructions delivered, and there he was hailed with hosannahs to the Son of David from children's lips. Early and late in his history he was to be found in the temple. He seems to have regarded it as his house, and his home. Single-handed he expelled the intruders who polluted its sanctuary with earthly merchandize, and dear as it was to his heart, he was moved at the thought that its honours would soon be laid prostrate in the dust.

The Saviour, then, has most assuredly come to his temple at Jerusalem; but has He come to the temple of our hearts? Has he taken up his abode within us? and does he guide and govern us as his servants? Is Christ an object of desire to us? Are we convinced that no object is half so desirable? or do we, like many of those of ancient times, content ourselves with a vague and mistaken expectation of future good from him?—an expectation in which we may be sadly disappointed. Oh! let us see that Christ is esteemed by us aright, and that the desire of his presence, and favour, and Spirit, daily rises above all the other desires of our hearts.

II. The second point which merits our attention, is the preparation for Christ's coming. "I will shake all nations." Remembering Christ's character as the Prince of Peace—as procuring peace with heaven and establishing peace on earth, we would naturally have expected that the signs of his coming would have corresponded with his

character, and that no emblem of violence would have preceded his appearance. We would have thought that the Son of God would have made his approach in the calm of the summer sunshine, when all was radiant and still, and not when the sky lowered and the clouds mustered for the tempest. We would have thought that the Saviour would have come when men were cool, and undisturbed, and ready to listen ; and not amid fears, and commotions, and bloodshed. But God has otherwise ordained, and bids us look for the precursors of his Son in the shakings of nations.

This was prophetic, and has also been exactly fulfilled. Though at the particular moment of the Saviour's incarnation and birth there was an unusual pause, the temple of Janus was shut, the emblem of peace—an event which had not taken place for 700 years—as if nature, and even the passions of men, would, by their silence, do homage to a present Deity, yet even then, the king, and priesthood, and all Jerusalem, were troubled ; and if we ascend to an earlier period, we find the whole world in a state of agitation preparing for his coming. Never were there as many and as violent commotions in so short a period as elapsed between Haggai's prophecy and Christ's manifestation. The mighty kingdom of Babylon sank before the Persian, the Persian before the Grecian, the Grecian before the Roman, in the brief space of 500 years, and every one of the changes was an important step in facilitating the establishment and triumph of Messiah's kingdom. Little did the agents in these rapid overthrows imagine that they were mere instruments in another's hand, and that in bringing about a cause which, had they known, they would have sought to oppose. They saw nothing but the agency of man. It was God, however, who shook the nations, and, out of their strife and violence, at length emerged his meek and merciful Son.

This is not a solitary instance of a strange mode of procedure. It is a beautiful exemplification of a fixed principle in the divine administration. When God is about to introduce any great improvement into his church, any era of light and enlargement, he generally precedes it by one of trouble and commotion. When he meant to put his people in possession of the promised land, what shakings were there in Egypt, and what shakings were there amongst the inhabitants of Canaan ! and when he prepared to reveal himself from Sinai, what clouds and thunderings, and lightnings, and sounds of terror, were the forerunners of his appearance ! And if we ask reasons for a procedure which, had men held the management, they would probably have been afraid to venture on, lest they should injure the success of their schemes, it is not difficult to find them. Such dispensations of Providence are obviously fitted to

awaken public attention to the presence and operations of God. When events move on peacefully, when they come and depart in a regular course, they are neither marked nor remembered; but when the usual course is interrupted, when unwonted revolutions break forth, men are compelled to think, and just as the events are great, and seem to exceed the counsel and the power of man, is the mind insensibly led up to God. We reverently recognise his operations, and when thus aroused, he discovers to us his plans and purposes. The shakings of the nations before the revelations of God, are just an admonition, a call of preparation to mark and listen to Jehovah, about to speak.

Other wise ends are gained by the same ordering of Providence. It often removes serious obstacles to the establishment and welfare of the Redeemer's Church. Persecutors and enemies, like Egypt and Babylon, are swallowed up, or greatly weakened in the foregoing calamities, and so rendered harmless. Lukewarm friends, too, are often removed. They have so seriously provoked God, that they are unworthy to see the good which he has provided for his church. They are unsuited to the building, and, if admitted, would spoil its excellency, as the six hundred thousand murmurers would have marred the glory of God's kingdom had they been introduced to Canaan; and so like them they are cut off when the day of the Lord draweth nigh. And lastly, the saints themselves are better fitted by preparatory commotions for the enjoyment of the approaching felicity. Did it come upon them while secure, it would not be so highly prized, and it would be apt to intoxicate and make them forgetful of God. But the previous poverty teaches them to relish the coming plenty. They are kept humble—led to hunger and thirst after Christ, and thus is their sanctification greatly promoted.

Since, then, it seems to be a principle of God's government, founded on obvious reasons, to introduce great good to his church by a previous era of trial and suffering, let us not wonder at commotions amongst the nations and in the visible church—let us expect them. Let us not imagine that this world is a scene of repose, nor let us look upon its struggles and revolutions as mere events of terror intended to alarm our fears. Let us regard them as the necessary precursors of Messiah's glory, and behold them with mingled composure, contentment, and satisfaction; and while far from insensible to the sufferings which they must occasion in their progress, let us not be strangers to the joyful anticipations which they are fitted to inspire.

When the believer considers what unholy passions and crimes are called forth by this world's commotions, and how its wars probably send thousands of unprepared spirits into the presence of their judge, he is ready to sink in sadness and almost wish that God's arrangements

respecting the advancement of his church were different. But let him be encouraged by the announcement of Haggai. Let him remember there is something great and unspeakably good behind the exterior of evil—let him qualify the dark features of the picture with the bright. Let him bear in mind that salvation is preparing to burst in greater glory and extension over a scene where he now beholds nothing but the havoc of destruction ; and just as the aspect of events grows darker, let him believe that the good, which is destined to succeed it, is the richer and more enduring.

Had he lived in the period which stretched between Haggai and the Saviour, many no doubt would have been his fears and misgivings, and as the sound of the overthrow of another and another empire broke upon his ear, would he have started and wondered, and probably quarrelled with the dispensation as bringing calamity to thousands. But had he seen the desert of the sufferers, and had he seen how every event which he deplored was conspiring to the Saviour's birth and the triumph of his cause, and how any other arrangement would have been detrimental to both, he would have been ashamed, and entreated forgiveness for his shortsightedness and unbelief.

Let us all seek to be the true followers of Christ, and to know it—let us be all sealed in our foreheads as his property—and *then*, when the angels shall let loose the four winds to dissolve the earth into ruin, not one breath of their violence shall reach us. Built upon Christ, we are built upon a rock. The storm may rise and the rain may descend, but we shall be safe. The political world may not only be shivered to pieces, the material may become a wreck, but, united to the Saviour, we shall stand unmoved, nay, enjoy the spectacle of its ruin.

III. The last point to which I proposed to direct your attention is the consequences of the coming of the Desire of all nations—"I will fill this house with glory." This intimation, like the preceding ones, is prophetic, and to all human appearance of fully less probable fulfilment than they. Any one who had beheld the temple of Solomon, or who had read the description of it, would hesitate in believing that any thing could surpass its glory. It seemed the highest effort of earthly splendour, and perhaps they, who thought it could not be exceeded, did not err greatly in their judgment ; but if they imagined (and no doubt they did so) that the glory, which the Desire of all nations was to bring to the temple, was outward and material, they sadly misunderstood the prophecy. If they imagined that this august personage was merely an architect, whose wealth and skill would compensate for the defects with which their poverty had dishonoured the building, they greatly deceived

themselves. If they reflected for a moment, they must have seen that it was, and could be no earthly glory which was spoken of. Surely if that were all which was intended, he who uttered the prophecy could easily have provided as much silver and gold as Solomon could ever command. Surely, for such a subordinate object as this, it was not necessary to shake and overturn nations. Surely a sufficient number of individuals might have been brought to pour all their treasures at the feet of the newly restored exiles without a single commotion. It was not, then, earthly glory with which the Saviour was to fill the temple. It was spiritual glory, and that the glory of his own bodily presence.

We often hear of a person of dignity conferring honour upon a humble dwelling by simply visiting it, and so Christ was to bestow glory upon the Temple of Jerusalem by making it the object of his visit and resort. But how strange does this seem, that any individual should honour a building which, even in these days of its decline, was still sufficiently glorious rather to bestow honour upon him ! Kings may dignify cottages, but who shall think of dignifying the house of God ? Who or what is the most magnificent monarch compared with the palace of the God of the universe ? Is he not a poor worm of the dust ? And if so, how strange does it seem to speak of Christ filling the temple with glory ! What glory can he boast of ? His outward appearance rather bespeaks its absence than its possession. Surely never did he draw one eye filled with the admiration of earthly greatness and splendour. He went to the temple indeed, and, like many others, he even made it a scene of frequent resort. But what then ? What did the temple gain by his presence ? Men saw in him no glory. They stood on the same pavement, and trod in the same footsteps. Some hurried past him, and some lingered in his company, and conversed with him, but saw nothing of what they accounted glorious. No officers connected with the temple—no Levite—shewed him any marked attention as greater than themselves. None discerned in his countenance aught to dazzle. His seemed the countenance of a meek, but suffering and weeping stranger.

But under all this outward abasement, he was the most glorious person in the world ; and every tear which he shed, and every pang which he bore, displayed a glory nobler far than all the collected pomp and triumph of conquerors could have expressed. He was God while he was man. The temple was his own, and, though a thousand times more dazzling than it ever appeared, it would have formed but a poor reflection of his glory. Apart from Him, and that in his low and suffering estate, the temple was nothing. It was a dream—a shadow without a substance. Its apparatus and its services taught nothing, or at best inspired with terror,

but through him—through that very person who, obscure and unobserved, walked its courts, it declared, in impressive symbols, the way of safety—the gate to heaven. Why was the temple built? Not to benefit or enrich God, but in condescension to the weakness of man—to impress him with the salutary conviction that God in very deed dwells around him, though unseen. In Christ, however, God appears as present, not in symbols, but personally; and was not, then, the temple far more glorified by his presence than it possibly could have been by any splendour, however great. What is inanimate lustre to the bodily living presence of Him who is Divine?

But besides the glory which is inseparable from the simple presence of Christ in the temple of Jerusalem, is there not an additional and spiritual glory in his character and doings? How complete the revelation of the Divine character and will, which he has communicated! How finished the atonement which he has wrought out! How pure and spiritual the worship which he requires! By appearing in our world, and undergoing the death which was due to sinners, and bestowing the gifts of the Spirit, has he not reared and taken up his residence in a far more glorious temple than ever stood on the hill of Zion? His church or true people, no longer confined to one spot, but encompassing the whole world—scattered in every country, now form his temple, and every individual believer forms a part; and is not the glory which shines forth in these more precious and resplendent far than any which was ever manifested in a material building?

What is the glory of mere matter to the glory of mind—to moral and spiritual glory? It is an easy thing comparatively to collect together gold and silver and precious ornaments, and form them into impressive proportions; but it is no easy attainment to subdue the enmities of the carnal mind—to form a soul, by nature averse to God, and what is spiritually good, to the love of both, and inspire with new views, new feelings, new life. However dazzling material lustre may be, it brings us no nearer to God, and with him it is held in no estimation; but the beauty of a renewed nature is precious to him, and assimilates to himself, to his own holy and happy image. The lustre of matter shall perish—the most costly furniture of the temple, and the most exquisitely finished of its parts, cannot escape the ravages of decay, or, should they do so, and survive to the latest hour of time, they must be dissolved in the flames which consume the world; but that moral and spiritual glory which results from the indwelling power of Christ's word and Spirit is immortal, shall undergo no change—shall shine untarnished through the revolutions of eternity.

And, now, are we temples of the Holy One? Has the Saviour come

and taken up his abode in our hearts, and our assemblies? Are we conscious of his presence? Are we ruled by his authority? Are we inspired with his Spirit? Unless these things be so, we are unspeakably poor and desolate. We may have all outward privileges and advantages—freedom of conscience—unfettered use of the word of God—a religious education—the restraints of providence and grace—and yet not one ray of the Saviour's glory may penetrate the darkness of our souls. Our churches may be perfect in their architecture without and their comfort within—all their arrangements may be excellent and praiseworthy; but unless filled with the Saviour's presence, they are no temples, but the prisons of the condemned. What would it have availed the Israelites in the desert that the whole furniture of the tabernacle was complete and well adjusted, if the cloudy pillar had been absent? They would have wandered till they were exhausted and lost, and so shall we, unless our assemblies be filled with the presence and Spirit of the God of the temple.

Let us dread, then, as one of the heaviest woes, that our churches should, like those of Asia, be deserted by the Saviour. It was an awful token of evil for the temple of Jerusalem when it was abandoned by him. Its pillars might look as fair and magnificent as ever, and the admiration of its beauty and proportions might not be less intense, but with the retiring Deity it ceased to be a temple—it was degraded into a house—"Your *house* is left unto you desolate;" and soon the Roman army fulfilled the prediction, not leaving one stone unseparated from another. And can we suppose that, if we prove unfaithful and unfruitful, we deserve, or shall receive, a milder treatment? Shall they, who were disobedient under the light of symbols, be overwhelmed, and shall we, who are disobedient under the light of the Saviour's personal manifestation, escape? Let us, then, flee the conduct which would tempt the Saviour to depart from our hearts and our assemblies.

Thus have we seen that Christ came to his temple, and that his presence filled it with a greater glory than it could boast of in the most prosperous days of the reign of Solomon. But there are senses, in which Christ may be said to come to his temple, *still unfulfilled*. While there are but two great comings of our blessed Lord—and all his people fully believe in them—his first coming in the flesh, and his second coming in future glory—there are other comings spoken of in Scripture, which may be called *comings in remarkable dispensations of providence to his church*. The destruction of Jerusalem is one of these, and is again and again expressly denominated the coming of Christ. The destruction of Antichrist, or the spiritual Babylon, is another. It is set forth in the prophecies of Daniel under the representation of the

Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days. But, when an explanation is asked of the vision, it is given in the statement, not that Christ is visibly to appear and reside upon the earth, but that, all enemies having been swept away, the kingdom and dominion are to be given to the saints of the Most High. Both these events are so beneficial to the church, so destructive to her enemies, and honouring to her Head, and are so expressly brought about by the power of Christ, that the result is similar to what might have been expected had he been visibly and personally present. Hence they are described by his coming, but not necessarily a visible coming, for there was no such coming at Jerusalem, and we are expressly taught that Elijah had come in the person of John the Baptist when he simply came in his spirit and power. But though the coming of Christ possesses different meanings—some stronger than others—we are not on that account to attach little weight to any forms of the expression. On the contrary, they are all plainly intended to convey a vast and solemn amount of meaning.

The first great event to which the church is taught to look forward, in connection with the coming of the Desire of all nations, is the overthrow of the Man of Sin and the subsequent setting up of the millennial kingdom; and though these prospects be in themselves full of gladness and hope, yet what solemnity of spirit may well mingle with them all! Previous to the downfall of the Man of Perdition, in consequence of his ascendancy before his final fall, in connection with the very efforts—the convulsive efforts which he may make for prolonged life—the witnesses in all probability will be called to encounter a terrible storm of persecution and woe, equal to, if not surpassing anything which has gone before. If to pull down Judaism, divinely appointed though this was, such an effort was required, how much more violent must be the struggle, which shall overthrow the long-cherished antichristian delusions of man? The shakings, we have every reason to believe, will be awful indeed; and it is a solemn consideration, that none can tell how soon the trumpet may sound, and how near we may be standing to the scene of change. As Christ came suddenly to his temple before, so he is represented as coming suddenly to his kingdom in the latter days. It is not when weak and emaciated by the gradual disappearance of her disciples, that Babylon is represented as receiving her doom. It is when, proud and powerful, she sits as a queen, that the church is exhorted to watch her fall.

But though judgment may begin at the house of God, and the destruction of Antichrist cannot take place without varied sufferings, let us remember on the other hand that there is blessed compensation, not only in the millenium which follows, but in the midst of the very judgments which extinguish the power and prospects of Antichrist. Analogy,

prophecy, the very indications of present things (supposing the church to be at present under the latter vials), all assure us of seasons of spiritual revival and enlargement, during the very currency of Antichrist's trial and doom. The Great Head of the church is too kind to his people to allow them to pass through the last terrible days uncheered. *Then* we may believe shall Joel's predictions of the outpouring of the Spirit, hitherto only partially accomplished, be made good. Seeing these things are so, let us in faith and prayer, humbly wait for the Saviour's coming. Whether the day be near or remote, it will come unexpectedly, and therefore the saints are counselled to watch.

Is it asked in what spirit, what attitude, what employment, should we wait? We answer by asking, How should servants await the midnight return of their Lord? Should they be sleeping in indolence? Should they be rioting in sinful indulgence, and at their master's expense? Should they be fighting and quarrelling with each other, and with their fellow servants, and turning the house into a scene of uproar? No. They should be busy in the discharge of their respective duties. They should be self-denied and ready for labour. They should be united in love to their fellow Christians. Above all, they should be earnest in their prayers and endeavours to spread abroad the master's glory, by adding to the number of his faithful servants. What employment can be more grateful to him? What spectacle more delightful, than on his return to find his house filled with holy and happy attendants, willing, nay anxious, to run upon his errands of labour, and mercy, and love?

As part of the church visible, we have a great deal to do for Christ, and, Blessed be his name! in his own spirit and strength, the church, to which we belong, is endeavouring, both at home and abroad, to prepare the temple for the advent of its Lord. He receives servants from the four winds of heaven—all countries are promised to him—all tribes and tongues shall yet be subject to him—the Jew and the Gentile—the heathen and nominally Christian. Let us be faithful in our efforts to multiply the number of believers. There is no inconsistency between home and foreign undertakings. It is one and the same spirit which animates both; the more that we do for our country, the more will we do for the world. Oh! let us raise up a temple for the Lord, wherever the British name is heard, wherever the British power is felt. What, comparatively speaking, is the use of all our science and art and inventions—our literature and philosophy—if they are not directly or indirectly to aid in the building of that glorious spiritual temple, which shall bless all people? Why have we as a Nation been raised to so high a place among the nations? Why have we as a Church been like a city set upon an hill crowned with unspeakable privileges and distinctions? Is it to make

a little noise among men—to fill up a bright page or two in the history of the world—and then perish for ever? No. It is to spread abroad the truth of God—to rear a house of worship for all nations, to hasten the glory of the latter days.

Oh! how sad will it be if we, whether as a church or a nation, neglect our duty and our destiny—if the Master comes to the temple, but only finds a few sleepy servants, the whole house in confusion and disorder, multitudes perishing around, without one to care for their souls. How dreadful will it be on the great day of advent, if the poor heathen at home, or the poor heathen abroad, can turn round with bitter reproach and say, “If this Christian Church or this Christian nation had done their duty, we might have been saved. A little zeal and fidelity, and courage and liberality, would have, with the Spirit’s blessing, carried us from the prison of death to the palace of life, and prepared us for the coming of the King of kings; but Christians would not remember us; they suffered us to perish; and *these* are men who say that they are bought with blood, that they have been delivered from condemnation—that they are heirs of heaven!”

The words of the context suggest a solemn admonition to the sinner. We might show how dangerous a thing it must be not only to feel no desire after the most desirable person in the world, but actually to oppose him. We might show how he, who is the Desire of nations, may well be the Desire of all individuals, and how the sinner’s opposition will not prevent the Saviour’s coming, or that of the judgments which pave the way to his millennial crown. But the consideration which I would suggest is still more impressive than even these. God declares in the 6th verse, “Yet *once* I shake the heavens;” and what is the meaning of such an announcement? Does it not proclaim in as many words that the dispensation introduced by the Desire of all nations is to be the last which God will vouchsafe. So this prophecy is interpreted by the apostle Paul, in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. And what a solemn reflection does it awaken? When men do not avail themselves of one way of escape from evil, there may be others already in existence or about to be revealed; but he who misses salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ will attain it by none else—by no future deliverer. Though the sinner should live to the age of Methusaleh, the silence of heaven will continue unbroken. God will speak no more—no political convulsions among the nations will ever shake or subvert the gospel dispensation of grace to introduce another. This is the last effort of God’s goodness—the last beseeching voice of compassion. Its language is, “Believe and live, reject and perish.”

And is it strange that things should be brought to so solemn a bear-

ing? Can there be a higher, a more suitable, a more affecting method of salvation than the gospel discloses? Could God do more than he has done? Could he manifest a deeper concern? Could he send forth a more moving expostulation, than in sending forth his dear, his only Son, to bear a weight of agony inconceivable by human imagination, unutterable by human lips. If this do not touch the sinner, what will? If Christ be rejected, who will be embraced? If he be scorned, who in heaven or in earth will be revered?

Oh remember that the last scheme of salvation is in your offer—that the last boat is about to put off from the wreck—that there neither is, nor will, nor can be another; and remember it will aggravate your doom unspeakably that, in neglecting the last, you have neglected the best, the most perfect, the most persuasive of all Heaven's exhaustless resources. "See, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him who speaketh from heaven."

SERMON LXXIII.

ON REPENTANCE.

BY THE REV. L. H. IRVING, FALKIRK.

“ Let us search and try our hearts, and turn again to the Lord.”—LAM. III. 40.

ALL the dealings of God with fallen men are characterized by plain and unequivocal tokens of supreme wisdom, purity, and beneficence. Not the least striking of these is the fixed and invariable relation which obtains betwixt holiness of heart and the actual enjoyment of the Divine favour, where, however, the state of the receiver's mind can in *nowise* be looked upon as the *procuring cause* of the blessings conferred. “ Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will grant thee the desires of thine heart,” is a truth over which the lapse of centuries, with all their vicissitudes, has no power, because the mouth of the Lord hath uttered it; and yet it would be in flagrant opposition to the whole tenor of God's word—a rejection of the gospel itself—were we to regard the delight of the believer's soul in God as the price of God's promised kindness. We have the testimony of God's word to the fact, that the only price which he will or can accept in order to the conferring of his favour on sinners, has been provided by himself in the mediation and atonement of his only begotten Son.

But, whilst every blessing of God's love is procured by and through Christ alone, there must, at the same time, be formed in the soul of the pardoned sinner a meetness for the enjoyment of God's favour and the realization of his fellowship, otherwise salvation would be but a name and a mockery. No change in us can alter our judicial relation to God, yet an entire change of nature is essential to our enjoyment of God—essential, because the complacency of the Holy God cannot rest on unrepenting, godless souls; nor could the godless, unrepentant soul find joy or peace in the felt presence of Jehovah. The salvation of the gospel is equally distinguished from Legalism and Antinomianism. Its only foundation is the righteousness of God in Christ—the atonement of the Son of God. It presents Jesus as the only way unto the Father; but it no less distinctly declares that “ without holiness, no man shall see

the Lord." When rightly apprehended, there exists the most perfect harmony betwixt the entire freeness of the gospel, on the one hand, and its holy requirements on the other. These requirements being not the condition but the necessary concomitants of salvation, nay, part and parcel of the very deliverance which Jesus came to effect, are absolutely essential not to the procuring but to the enjoyment of pacific intercourse with the living God. "For what fellowship hath Christ with Belial? What communion hath light with darkness?" It is in this light that we find, throughout the whole volume of revelation, a distinct prominence given to the necessity of repentance, whether under the teaching of prophets, or apostles, or of the Lord himself. The burden of all their solicitations is, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." In further dwelling on this momentous subject, I would desire, in dependence on the needful help of the Holy Spirit, to advert,

I. To the nature of true repentance ;

II. To the encouragement held out to those who repent ;

III. To the practical bearing of these topics on the consciences and condition of all to whom the word of God comes.

I. We are first to consider the nature of repentance—that repentance which is "unto salvation, and which needeth not to be repented of." It will be evident to those who give any degree of attention to the subject, that repentance pre-supposes a knowledge of our previous condition, "Let us *search* and *try* our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Before we can sincerely turn to the Lord, we must be sensible of our alienation from him. Self-complacency must first give way to the convictions of our personal worthlessness before we will apply to God at once for mercy to pardon and for grace to help. They that think themselves whole, feel not their need of the physician. They who have no sense of sin will not turn from it unto God. They who have never felt the weariness and wretchedness of their natural state—who have never, in any measure, experienced the misery and guiltiness of their sins—are still destitute of that very knowledge which must precede the exercise of Scriptural repentance. Nay more, the sense of sin and sinfulness of which we speak, must be no mere general and theoretic opinion—no mere notion ; but a heartfelt conviction of entire and aggravated sinfulness, humbling the sinner in the dust, and depriving him of all fancied righteousness in the judgment of his own conscience. Combined with this humiliating knowledge of his sinfulness, there must be also some measure of acquaintance with the character and perfections of that God with whom the sinner has to do. He cannot be said to turn to God at all

who entertains false views of the Divine character—who conceives either that God is not perfectly pure, and may make a compromise with the sinner, or that in the repentance or sorrow of the sinner there is a compensation for the heavy debt incurred by him to the Divine law. “To wash out our sins by the tears of penitence” may harmonize with the poesy and theology of heathenism; but it comports not at all with the lessons of God’s truth; nay, it is as false in the eye of right reason as it is contrary to the word of God. No amount of mere sorrow over our misdeeds can alter the character of these transactions, or make it consistent with perfect justice to pass them by. And, in his holy word, God has clearly declared, that, whilst “the blood of Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin,” “no man can come unto the Father” but by him. It is in Christ only that God is to be sought and found, and this fact must be apprehended and acted on by every one who turns unto the Lord.

As yet, however, we have spoken simply of that which is preliminary—of that which, in the order of nature, must precede the exercise of repentance. We have not entered on the consideration of the grace itself. The convictions of sin, the knowledge of God’s character, and the reception of the fact that, in Jesus alone, can God be found as a reconciled God and Father, may all, and, alas! do often all subsist without one movement of repentance within the breast. The views of the sinner as to these matters may be clear and decided, and yet be mere intellectual perceptions after all—not affecting the life, because not influencing the heart. Godly sorrow has its seat in the affections. It is heartfelt grief—a real and poignant sentiment of anguish on account of sin; and whilst the soul of the repentant sinner does mourn over the bitter consequences of sin, yet his mourning is not confined to the evils resulting from his iniquity. There will be in the heart that truly seeks the Lord a commencement, at all events, of hatred to sin—a sense of its hideousness and deformity. It will be odious in his sight; he will loathe himself on account thereof. Not content with mere regret arising from the personal results of sin to himself, the true penitent will mourn over his sin as committed against God, and the deeper his sense of God’s mercy, the more profound and self-abasing will be his sense of sin’s exceeding sinfulness. Nor will he wish to retain the practice or the love of sin’s ways. He will turn from it, and will turn unto God—to God himself—to God in Christ—to Him who “so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have eternal life;” but yet who is “of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity.” Such a turning to God must be accompanied with the purpose of reformation. The soul cannot be said to turn to God at all where there is

the purpose of continuing in sin, or where no purpose to forsake sin exists. Such pretended repentance is a mockery of God. It will be plain to every single-hearted student of God's word, and of his own heart, that not merely must the purpose of amendment exist, a firm and settled purpose of breaking off from the commission of iniquity where the soul truly turns to God, but that this purpose must and will give evidence of its presence and reality by some efforts at an obedience of a very different character from the former meagre external compliance with decencies and forms which contented the unrenewed mind. Where the soul hath really sought the Lord as he is to be found, there will be manifested the Spirit's presence in efforts at a holy, a spiritual, and heartfelt conformity with the whole will of God. The true penitent counts himself as not his own, but as bought with a price. He feels constrained by the very mercies of God to be "not conformed unto the world, but transformed through the renewing of his mind, that he may prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God." He now knows something of the new life, its blessings and its obligations, its joys and its pursuits. He begins to follow Christ, "to take up his cross daily, to deny himself, and to go after Christ." He is called upon to make it manifest before all men that he has changed sides indeed; that he is now the soldier of Christ, and entered on the good fight of faith. Whilst the child of God experiences all this in turning from sin, he is called further to beware of regarding his repentance as in itself worthy of God's acceptance; our very righteousnesses are even as filthy rags in the presence of him who sitteth on the throne, and our repentance not only flows from the imparted grace of God, but at best can be acceptable in God's sight only through the mediation of the beloved. The believer is further called on to feel that repentance is not proper, simply to the first stage of his spiritual existence—that it holds not only an elementary place in practical Christianity, but belongs to the whole currency of his life on earth. Alas! when is the believer free from sin? When can he say with truth, I have nothing to sorrow over in my conduct, nothing to turn from? Alas! up to the moment of final deliverance from all remanent corruption by the stroke of death, the believer has to tell of sins manifold and heinous. And how revolting to any spiritual mind is it to be told, forsooth, that the believer need give himself no trouble about these, seeing that his soul is safe from punishment?—or, as it is sometimes put, that believers cannot commit sin—that their actions are not sinful—Christ having taken away all their guilt? What iniquitous folly is this? Believers do, alas, commit sin, and sin is *sin* to them, nay, the sins of Christ's people are of a blacker dye than those of a godless world. The sins of Christ's people are steeped in deeper turpitude

through the very mercy and tenderness which the Lord hath shewed unto them. Witness the experience of Peter and of David, and the convictions of every child of God when exercised by that "godly sorrow" over sin, which "worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." And it is thus, alas, that the believer finds room for the exercise of repentance at every stage of his earthly pilgrimage. Yet where repentance is real, not feigned—where the soul truly turns to God—the evidence of its existence will be furnished not in desultory and unsustained efforts at reformation of life, but in the vigorous and energetic putting away from the soul and from the walk of those things which defile the man. The truly penitent will make it their study "to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset them, and to run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus"—"pressing on to the mark of the high calling of God."

I cannot more besittingly conclude these remarks on the nature of repentance, than just by rehearsing the "sound words" of the Shorter Catechism on this subject. "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience."

II. I would advert, in the *second* place, to the encouragements to repentance held out to us by God. This is a wide field; the Lord has not been sparing in the manifestation of such encouragement. The whole word of God is stored with invitations and inducements to "turn again to the Lord." To these we can only direct your attention in your private perusal of God's holy message: every page of the Bible urges them on our notice; and what is the meaning of the very existence of God's word as a communication of his will to us for salvation? Does not the very existence of the Bible proclaim that God waiteth to be gracious? Instead of selecting a series of striking invitations from the fertile pages of the Divine record, I would rather seek to place before you a few of the great truths which are embodied in the numerous and very varied appeals to man's conscience contained in Scripture. The foremost of these truths is the fact of God's mercy. He is merciful—the father of mercies. In spite of the dark and gloomy apprehensions which arise in the carnal heart in reference to God, He is pre-eminently merciful and long-suffering, full of compassion. Were it not so, how could we turn to him at all? What hope could we possess—what prospect could we entertain in seeking the Lord at all?

But the proofs of God's inherent mercy are not few, neither are they

of small amount. Not only do all the gifts of his hand bespeak a wondrous forbearance, a marvellous compassion, but we owe our very existence, amid our sins, to the compassion of the eternal: we are all of us living monuments of his mercy; "because his compassions fail not," therefore are we not consumed. God has not, however, limited the manifestation of his mercy to the mere preservation of our guilty race, and the bestowal of multiplied temporal blessings. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have eternal life." He has furnished in the death of his holy child Jesus, a revelation of mercy unspeakable, a depth of compassion which we cannot rightly comprehend—it passeth knowledge. And in Christ, God is continually calling unto us to seek his face. He spreads his mercy all abroad before us—pleads with us—entreats us—yea, commands us to turn unto him, assuring us of the tenderest and kindest reception. "Oh, Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help found." Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." "The Lord loveth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live."

But it is not to the mercy of God that I would confine your attention, in urging upon you the encouragements to repentance held out to us in God's holy word. The justice of God furnishes under the gospel dispensation the strongest of all encouragements to the exercise of this grace. Nor is there any paradox in the assertion. To the sinner who looks to God merely as a judge, the justice of the Divine character presents no inviting aspect. If awakened at all from the lethargy of carnal indifference, his soul recoils from a God of perfect purity, of inflexible justice—who can make no compromise with sin. The flaming sword is then seen, barring the way to the tree of life. But in Christ Jesus, God is just, and yet the justifier of the sinner who truly seeks his face. In Christ, God is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to men their trespasses. In Christ, mercy and truth meet together, God's righteousness and the sinner's peace are made to embrace each other. And thus, in the marvellous and holy plan of God's redeeming love, not only is it rendered perfectly consistent with the justice of God to save even the chief of sinners, but further, the justice of God, that stern and awful attribute whose terrors freeze the life-blood of the convicted but not converted sinner, becomes, through the substitution of the Son of God in the room of sinners, the very tower of strength—the secure hiding place of the repentant soul. The flaming sword becomes his safeguard, and just because God is holy, perfectly holy, inflexible in his justice, the same yesterday, to-day, and for-ever, "have they strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before

them." In the personal character of him who is the way, and the truth, and the life, the sacrifice, and the intercessor, there is also stored up much precious encouragement in drawing nigh unto God in the exercise of contrition and godly sorrow. He whose voice bids us draw near, who is himself the very channel of acceptance, and who is exalted at the right hand of God for the very end that as "a prince and Saviour he may give repentance unto life and the remission of sins," he is set before us in God's word, arrayed in all the tenderness and compassion which filled his bosom when he beheld the doomed city and wept over it. "He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed," until he sends forth judgment unto victory. His compassion and loving kindness are beyond all expression, and in the exercise of this very compassion does he stand at the door and knock, not only removing any obstacle out of the way, but pressing and urging on souls the precious invitations of his love, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, for I will give you rest;" "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

From what has been advanced in regard to the nature of repentance, the disquieted and dispirited sinner may be apt to exclaim, of what service are all the encouragements to repentance, when repentance itself involves in its very exercise feelings which I do not possess, and which I know not how to obtain? To this objection, when urged not in the spirit of vain cavil, or as a cloak for wilful continuance in sin, but under the felt and painful conviction of inherent helplessness, we are furnished in God's word with a most cheering and consolatory answer. The Lord hath provided for such a case, along with the repeated, earnest, and tender calls addressed to us by God, which the depravity of our nature renders us incapable of obeying. There have issued from the mercy seat the promises, the full, clear, and reiterated promises of all needful grace. It is in God himself that our succour lies. "Oh, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help found." It is the province of the Holy Spirit to soften the hard heart, to turn the unwilling soul to God, to plant life where spiritual death has reigned. It is to the promised help of this Almighty agent, secured in Christ, that we would direct every trembling, convicted, helpless soul. No qualifications, no meritorious conditions are demanded—the promise is absolutely free. We are told to come as beggars unto God's gate, helpless, undeserving beggars, overwhelmed with the feeling of our wants; but there is this striking difference betwixt our case and that of the beggar at the dwell-

ing of his fellow-man, that whereas the poor houseless being knows not, when he knocks, that any heed shall be paid to his application—knows not but that in this hard world all relief may be churlishly refused and he himself spurned from the rich man's door, we sinners, on the other hand, though undeserving of any kindness, nay, deserving God's curse, have the assurance of God's own truth, that the application of felt want, the simple cry of real necessity, will ever find ready entrance into the ear of Him who sitteth on the throne. We are beggars at God's gate, but over that gate there are inscribed no doubtful, mazy words. God has written there in characters of soul-cheering light, "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." And this promise has he sealed in the life-blood of his own beloved son. Nay, are we not entitled to say farther to the stricken and wounded sinner, that already has God begun to have mercy upon him. The very convictions and sorrows that he feels, whence spring they? Assuredly not from the mere spontaneous workings of a sinful soul. Are they not tokens of good things to thank God for, and which encourage the poor sinner to spread his whole case before the Lord?"

III. In conclusion, permit me to point out to you the practical bearings of these considerations on the condition and consciences of men. These, it is evident, must vary according to the diversities that obtain betwixt the spiritual state of the gospel hearers. It is no less plain that all the various subdivisions of character are comprehended in two great classes—those who have turned to the Lord, and those who have not yet sought him in spirit and in truth. Were these now separated and classed, as they will be in the great day of account, no human being would be left out. We cannot trace the line of demarcation now as we shall do in the judgment presence of Christ. Yet is that line broad and well-defined, even now, in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity." Without adverting to the endless variety of shades which subdivide these two great sections of the dwellers on the earth, I would address myself, first of all, to the followers of Christ, those who have known what it is "to turn unto the Lord"—who have been quickened by his Spirit in the inner man, and "having the Son"—"have life"—life indeed, life eternal. I would call upon them to recognise not merely the duty, but the precious privilege of repentance. It is manifestly the believer's duty to turn to the Lord, to turn from his sin to God; and as sin still finds such abundant entrance into the believer's heart—seeing that his failures and backslidings are so fre-

quent and so fearful, how imperative is the obligation laid on him by the very circumstances of his present state, "to search and try his ways, and to turn unto the Lord," to cherish and foster a constant spirit of repentance, aye and until the final separation betwixt his soul and sin shall take place, through that last instrument of purification which the Holy Spirit is pleased to use, even death? There is, moreover, a most precious privilege afforded to the believer in the very exercise of true penitence. Humbling and mortifying as may be the convictions under which the soul seeks God's bosom, yet there is no misery in the exercise of godly sorrow. There is a chastened, subdued, but most balmy enjoyment in thus turning to God, which makes the seasons of repentance to be at once the saddest and the sweetest of the believer's experience here below. To turn to God is just to realize his presence in all the fulness of his redeeming love—to taste that he is gracious—to seek the shelter of his power—to experience what David felt when, having turned unto the Lord, he could say, "Thou art my hiding-place."

Let the believer beware of that state of mind in which he may be ready to say, "I have no need of repentance." Let him that standeth or that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We are never more in need of grace than just when we think best of ourselves. Self-complacency is the sure token of backsliding from the Lord. Further, I would call on the follower of Christ to beware when he encounters a secret reluctance to engage in that self-examination which the text enjoins. We have but too good reason to tremble when we shrink from the scrutiny of our own conscience—when we cannot bear to try our own ways, to examine our own motives, and to come to the truth as to our own spiritual condition. When such reluctance is felt, let the believer set himself most earnestly to find out its cause, humbling himself before the Lord, from whom it is but too plain he must have been departing, and seeking his help, without which we can do nothing. Let the believer, at such a season, with exceeding earnestness "search and try his ways," that "he may turn again to the Lord."

With regard to those who have never yet experienced true repentance, who may perhaps regret their sins at times when the evils flowing from sin are felt by them, but whose regrets have been vain and fruitless—the mere sorrow of the world that worketh death—I would beseech them, with all earnestness, to "turn unto the Lord." What profit is there in destruction—what benefit in endless ruin? I would beseech them to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call on him while he is near. They have never found happiness in sinning, and how withering is the retrospect of the sinner's life! In resisting the call to repentance, the sinner is not simply putting away from him the only way of peace and

happiness—he is resisting, madly resisting, the expressed mind of God—God's holy commands; and whether he be a profligate or a man of decent life—whether an avowed Atheist or a professed Christian—whether he defy God or turn away to the things of this world in besotted infatuation, his course, in either case, is in direct opposition to the will of God. It does not certainly lessen the guilt of his impenitence that forsooth he is not wallowing in degraded vices—that he is free from the grosser forms of external sinfulness—that he makes a high profession, or maintains a decent walk before men. The hardened heart may be thus veiled over in the eyes of men, but its worthlessness is all exposed in the eye of God, and the soul that turneth not to him must be destroyed. Let sinners hear what God is addressing unto them. They must listen to his voice at last. Would to God they heard it now! Oh, that He would touch and turn their hearts before it is all over—before death shuts the gate of mercy for ever! There is no way of escape after death—there is no repentance in hell. If there be in any bosom some movements of fear, some visitations of remorse, and some forebodings of future misery, Oh! let not the sinner seek any more to stifle these—however feeble, peradventure they may be the last—the last knockings of the Son of God at the door of their affections—the last departing echoes of the Redeemer's footsteps. Resist these movements—quench these convictions—and may not God be giving you up to your own ways for ever? “Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.”

SERMON LXXIV.

THE DIGNITY AND DUTY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

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“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”
—Ephes. iv. 30.

THE Epistle from which these words are taken was written by Paul, from the prison at Rome, where he lay as a sufferer for the truth. The lofty views it contains, and the rich savour of divine things which pervades it, show that he was not without the presence of Him for whom he was willing to endure the loss of all things; but that, on the other hand, his sufferings were so sanctified, as not only to benefit his own soul, but the Church of Christ to which his precious communications were sent. It is addressed to the Ephesian converts, among whom he had personally laboured at a former time, and in whose welfare he continued to feel a deep interest. As in other of his Epistles, he begins with a statement of Christian doctrine, and towards the close enforces the necessity of a holy obedience to the Divine precepts. In the passage before us, he is warning the Ephesians against the commission of several sins, to enforce the avoidance of which the text is introduced, containing a motive of which the full force could only be felt by those who have been translated out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. It is to believers, then, that he here speaks—to those who, while all lie under an obligation to obey God, have had their previous obligations enhanced and increased by the distinguishing and sovereign grace of which they have been made the subjects.

The text suggests two topics for our consideration; *first*, The dignity of the people of God, as being sealed with the Holy Spirit, and *secondly*, The consequent duty resting on them, viz., to beware of grieving the Holy Spirit.

I. Believers are “sealed with the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption.” From these words it might be easy to establish the Deity and Personality of the Holy Spirit, since to none but a distinct and divine person could the important part in the economy of grace here spoken of, be ascribed. But, taking these doctrines for granted, we
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proceed to explain shortly what is meant by the phrase which the Apostle here employs. Many have imagined, that a sufficient explanation of the sealing of believers may be found by a reference to the purposes for which a seal is ordinarily employed. Now, it is true that certain parts of the Spirit's work may, in this way, be very clearly brought out. For example, does a seal leave upon the wax an impression of the characters or device engraven on its own surface? So does the Holy Ghost trace the Divine image on the souls of them whom He inhabits. Does a seal give additional validity to written engagements? So does the Holy Ghost make sure to believers all that for which God has pledged himself to them in his word. Do men seal up what they put great value upon, by way of protection and security? So does the Holy Ghost keep by his mighty power the ransomed of the Lord, the crown-jewels of Emmanuel, guarding them as the apple of his eye, and providing for their perfect safety against the day of final redemption. But whilst these are truths, whilst they are in strict accordance with Scripture, and most consolatory in their own nature, be it observed that if any or all of them were to be held as constituting the sealing of believers, this would be to represent the Spirit as *applying* the seal, whereas he seems to be himself the seal, and he who applies this seal is God, the first person of the adorable Trinity. That this is the case—that the Spirit is not the *sealer*, but the seal, appears from different passages in the word of God. Thus, in 2 Cor. i. 21, 22, we read, "He which stablisheth us in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts"—where the Holy Ghost is represented as being to believers at once the anointing, the seal, and the earnest, while it is plainly asserted that he who makes him all these is God. Again, in a previous part of the Epistle from which our text is taken (i. 13), the Apostle, addressing the Ephesian converts, says, that "after they believed in Christ, they were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The same truth indeed would have been made equally manifest by our text, had the word "whereby" been rendered "in whom" or "with whom" as the original warrants.

In what, then, consists this sealing of believers by God with his Spirit? It is simply the imparting to them by the Father of the precious gift of his own Holy Spirit. Whenever he is made to dwell in them, God has applied the seal to their souls. Thus it was in the case of Christ, the elder brother of the redeemed, who speaks of it in express terms; "Him (*viz.* Christ) hath God the Father sealed." The Spirit was the seal which Christ bore; the Father gave the Spirit unto him, and that without measure. The seal was impressed upon him in all its breadth—with such distinctness, that they who were blind to it were without

excuse. He was manifested thereby to be the ambassador from heaven's court, empowered to transact the mighty errand on which he came to the world, and to which God had appointed him—it was seen and acknowledged that “God was with him”—that “He was separate from sinners,” enjoying the countenance and approbation of his Heavenly Father. By this seal of the Spirit, too, it became impossible that Christ could fail or be discouraged in his enterprise; God, in thus sealing him, virtually saying, “Behold my servant whom I uphold.” Now, as Christ was thus sealed, so in the same manner, though only to some extent, are his people sealed. They partake of the same Spirit, though in less measure, and, as was not the case with him, amidst the remains of ignorance and sin. By his Spirit, God is present with them—through his indwelling they have the witness within themselves that they are of God—they are strengthened for the doing and suffering of his will—they are preserved from falling—they are separated from those who are “of the world, sensual, not having the Spirit.” They are God’s peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God “unto the day of redemption.” In whom this Holy Spirit once takes up his abode, He dwells for ever—whom He loves he loves to the end. He is the preparation for, the pledge and the foretaste of, eternal happiness. But whilst those who are his living temples enjoy, by means of his inhabitation, the prelude of heaven’s bliss, even while they are on earth, it is yet no more than a prelude. The day of their redemption, however, draweth nigh—the last day, when their souls shall be reunited to their bodies, from which they have been dissevered for a time—when themselves shall be redeemed from the power of death and the grave—when the inheritance, which sin had forfeited, and which now lies as it were under mortgage, shall be redeemed. Of this inheritance shall believers on that day be put into complete possession, and themselves for ever erected as monuments to the “praise of the glory of God.”

Such is the dignity, such are the privileges of those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption. But because they are so honoured of God—because he dwells in them—because their inheritance is secured—because the day of judgment is to be to them a day of redemption—may they safely, presuming on their condition, give way to lukewarmness and sloth, to indifference about divine things, to worldly-mindedness, to sin? No! This were to turn the grace of God to licentiousness, to sin because grace had abounded. The privileges of God’s people are invariably represented as motives to a purer holiness, and to a more devoted obedience. Do you enjoy the indwelling of the Spirit? Have you the impress of a holy God upon you?

Has the seal of the first Adam, the seal of Satan, once upon you, been shivered in pieces? and has your soul been stamped with the signet of the King of Heaven? Then, if so, whilst formerly you may have walked "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air," see that now it may be said of you, as it was said of the brethren of Gideon, "Each one resembles the children of a king;" see that you value aright your holy vocation; acting, speaking, thinking, as it becomes the entertainer of a heavenly guest, as bearing about in your body the Spirit of the living God.

II. This leads me to consider the duty of the people of God as here indicated—"Not to grieve the Holy Spirit." Observe that the Apostle directs the thoughts of believers to their lofty and enviable position, not without a purpose, neither that they should be unduly elated, but that he might thereby give force and efficacy to his injunction, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Why? For "with Him ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

When we are enjoined not to *grieve* the Holy Spirit, the Apostle speaks of the Spirit after the manner of men. In one sense the Spirit cannot be grieved, inasmuch as by no act of any created being can his happiness be impaired,—his happiness being, like all that relates to him, infinite, unchanged, and unchangeable, from everlasting to everlasting. We may be said, however, to grieve him, when we act towards him in such a way as that if we acted similarly towards good men, with whom we were connected, they would thereby be grieved. And he may be said to be grieved by us, when, in consequence of our so acting, he acts towards us as good men would do, were they grieved by us.

Now, in what way may believers thus grieve the Spirit? We need only to remember that he is God, infinitely holy, ever near his own, ever cognisant of all their actions,—we need only to remember these things to be convinced, that sin in every form and degree is fitted to grieve him, when committed by them who are sealed unto him, and whom consequently he regards with affection.

He is the guide of the people of God in the paths of righteousness, desiring to lead them into all truth, to complete the likeness of God upon their souls, and to carry them forward in the divine life till they have a meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light." But do you refuse at times to hearken to his counsels? Do you rebel against his government? Do you resist His holy motions and leadings? Pleading the plausible pretext of the remaining imperfections of humanity, or, what is worse, abusing the doctrine of the necessity of the Spirit's aid in sanctification, so as virtually to throw the blame of your defects upon

Him, do you give yourself up to sloth and indolence, and rest contented with present attainments? Then, in so far do you grieve Him who would gladly help you forward, who is willing and waiting to "perfect that which concerneth" you.

Are you tempted to forget your entire dependence on the Holy Spirit? Do you enter on the discharge of duty in a proud, presumptuous, self-confident spirit? This also offends Him, for He is jealous of his honour, and will not give his glory to another. While kind, and gracious, and condescending, He will have it felt and acknowledged that His grace alone is sufficient. Observe how Paul guards against sin in this matter, for on saying "I laboured more abundantly than they all," he instantly adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Do you altogether forget at times the important part which the Holy Spirit acts in the matter of your own redemption? Do you even forget his very existence? While grateful to the Father for the gift of His own Son—while remembering with devout emotions the love of the Saviour, which led Him to endure for you the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary, do you overlook the infinite benevolence of the Divine agent, but for whose offices even Christ had died in vain? Oh! how must this grieve Him who never ceases to remember you, who cares for and protects you, until by his grace you be brought in safety to the heavenly kingdom!

Do you on any occasion lightly esteem the Saviour, entertaining inadequate views of His atonement and righteousness, and, like the men of the world, seeing no beauty in Him that you should desire Him? Then how must this grieve the Holy Spirit, who has no other object to set before the eye of your faith, whose office it is to reveal Christ, to take of the things of Christ and to shew them to the soul. Wherever neglect is manifested towards the Son, it cannot but be felt by the Spirit.

Do you give way to faint-heartedness and unbelief? When you contemplate your wants, your infirmities, your utter helplessness, and the little progress you have made in your journey Zionward, do you not only weep and lament, but are you well-nigh ready to despond? But this betrays a want of confidence in the ability and willingness of the Spirit to promote and consummate the work of your sanctification, and must be offensive to Him, who, having sought and found you, having brought you from darkness to light, has manifested not only the kindest intentions towards you, but a power which is capable of transforming miserable sinners into perfect men in Christ Jesus.

Do you omit known duties? Do you wait upon Divine ordinances with little concern about your frame of mind, while engaged in them?

Do you come to them without preparation? Do you go away from them without improvement? Do you not seek earnestly the direction, the aid, the grace of the Spirit? Do you fail to pray to Him? Then, if so, in the same proportion as such sin exists, do you "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed unto the day of redemption."

But it is not to be omitted, that the position which our text occupies, indicates that the Holy Spirit is especially grieved by the commission of the sins which are condemned in the preceding and subsequent verses. He is omniscient, "searching the hearts and trying the reins of the children of men." Every perverse imagination—every impure and unholy desire, is offensive to Him who is holy in Himself, and the author of holiness in them who are his. Strife and bitter contending, anger, and wrath, and malice, and revenge,—all these are opposed to Him who is the Spirit of Peace, and who came down on our Saviour like a dove. Foolish and vain, still more unseemly and corrupt communications—the love of the world, the pursuit of frivolous objects, all are unworthy of them before whom heavenly things have been set, and who have been taught to aspire at the joys of immortality; and when indulged by such as are marked out for glory, cannot fail to grieve "the Holy Spirit of God with whom they are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Let us then be ever on our guard against all that would tend to grieve the Holy Spirit, if we would avoid the sin of undutifulness towards the kindest and most faithful friend whose presence and companionship we could enjoy. In all that grieves Him, we sin against our own souls, for without Him no blessing can be enjoyed, without Him the gifts of God's providence, religious ordinances, nay, even the work of Christ himself—all had been set before us in vain. Would we esteem it the height of ingratitude for one causelessly to offend a good and gracious benefactor, to whom perhaps his very preservation and happiness were owing, and deprived of whom life would become a bane and curse? But who can estimate the folly and sin of those who, ungrateful to the author of all their spiritual mercies, grieve their only leader in the pathway to glory, their only help in danger, their only comforter in trouble, their only joy in life and support at death, their only earnest of the blessedness of heaven.

But in this case, as in every other where sin is committed, there is danger to be apprehended, and the expression in the text suggests, as we have already seen, that if believers grieve the Holy Ghost, He will act towards them as an aggrieved friend would do in such circumstances. And how would this be? Would it not be in withdrawing at least from their society? Thus is it with the Spirit. Not that the children of God, even when guilty of grieving the Spirit,

are utterly cast away, or become reprobate. No! they were loved in Christ, and chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. They may fall, but they are raised again—they may sin, but they are forgiven. There may be tokens of God's wrath against their sins, while His love goes forth towards their persons. The word and the oath of God are pledged in covenant, that they who are once His, shall never perish. That word and oath are the security of His people. "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not a man that he should repent."

Neither do we mean, when we speak of the Spirit withdrawing from believers, that He *actually* removes from them. Where He takes up His abode, He dwells for ever. His perpetual and constant indwelling is guaranteed by the promise of the Saviour, "The Father shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

It is not, then, the actual possession of the Spirit that the godly lose, when they are guilty of grieving Him. It is the sweet sense of His presence with them, the sweet experience of His gracious influences. These may for a time be interrupted. He will not remove his residence, but He may suspend His operations. Then the soul, which before was all light and gladness, is visited with a dread eclipse, and sorrow, gloom, melancholy, follow in its train. No ray of hope penetrates the darkness—a darkness deeper than midnight—a darkness like that of Egypt—one that can be felt. Above, within, around, the believer looks for peace; but he looks in vain. Like Mary at the sepulchre, he is ready to exclaim, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him;" or with Job, "Oh that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head." The Spirit has ceased to witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, and thus his great source of comfort and joy is dried up. Like Jonah, he addresses the Lord, "Out of the belly of hell cried I; all thy billows and thy waves passed over me; then I said I am cast out of thy sight."

If then, believer, you would avoid in future what you may have already experienced, the misery of a deserted soul, the want of the quickening, sanctifying, cheering influences of the Holy Spirit, beware of grieving Him, and by sin forcing Him as it were to withdraw from you. Remember, also, that as an aggrieved friend may exhibit his displeasure in a more severe way than by a temporary withdrawal, so may this Divine and Omnipotent Agent. He may, if you persist in grieving Him, visit you with outward judgments, and abandon you during their continuance. He may give you up to assaults which you cannot withstand. He may not strengthen or uphold you when "Satan desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat." He may leave

you in doubt and uncertainty in regard to your soul's state—in regard to your everlasting destiny. Nay, if you take not heed, He may suffer you to die in this fearful suspense, keeping back the light of His countenance when you are quivering on the brink of an eternal world. He may make your departure to be such that the godly may unwillingly conclude that your profession has been false, and the unbeliever may find from you occasion to blaspheme.

Thus far we have been addressing the children of God ; but ah ! how many of those who hear may be up till this time the servants of Satan, without part or lot in the matters of redemption. They are not all Israel who are of Israel, neither are all who wait on the public ordinances of religion sealed with the Holy Spirit of God. If you have never seen your need of receiving the Spirit—if you have never sought the dignity of being dwelt in by God—if you have no joys and no anxieties but what are connected with time and the world—if the whole subject of the Spirit's influences is one without meaning and without interest to you, these things furnish a melancholy proof that you are yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Let me remind you of the solemn and alarming declaration, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." If you bear not the image and superscription of Emmanuel, you must bear the image and superscription of Satan. Great no doubt is the dignity of God's people ; but if it be not yours, the only other alternative is a depth of misery and degradation that is inconceivable. If the Spirit be not your friend, he must be your enemy—if you be not sealed with him, he must fight against you. And oh ! what a hard and unequal contest you will wage, if you are opposed by the arm of Omnipotence, the arm that sways the sceptre of the universe. How will the day of redemption to believers, consummating their bliss, be to you a day of fearful retribution, consummating your misery ; and how awful the idea, that having in this world given yourself to the service of the Wicked One, having habitually lived under his influence and yielded to his temptations, he should then appear, claiming you as his lawful property, and dragging you to the wretched abode of the lost, where "the smoke of their torment continually ascendeth." Oh ! "seek the Lord while he may be found, call on him while he is near." Ask the gift of the Spirit—ask in faith, remembering the gracious words of Him for whose sake only is He given to any, "If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him."

To you who believe we would, in conclusion, address a single word. Are you at this time in darkness, having no light ? Are you heavily bowed down ? Do you go mourning all the day long ? Consider in how

far your dark and dejected state may be traced to your grieving the Holy Spirit of God. Humble yourself under His mighty hand. Search out, acknowledge, abandon whatever has offended Him. And let your cry for his gracious and comforting presence ascend to heaven :

“ Return, O holy Dove ! return,
Sweet messenger of rest ;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.”

Has any one peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost ? See that you value your privilege—see that you walk worthy of it. Avoid whatever would grieve the Spirit—nay more, seek that with your thoughts and words and deeds He may be delighted, instead of grieved. “ Let Him,” as a commentator expresses it, “ dwell in you willingly, as in a pleasant and agreeable habitation.” Seek to be filled with the Spirit, and, when tempted to the commission of any sin, abstain even from its appearance, not only because it is hateful in the sight of God, but because in suffering yourself to be overcome, you would crucify the Lord afresh and “grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

SERMON LXXV.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. HENRY DUNCAN, D.D., RUTHWELL.

"Who also maketh intercession for us."—Rom. viii. 34.

THE apostle Paul, in the beginning of his first epistle to the Colossians, after adverting to the divine nature of Christ, and describing the infinite power which he exercises in heaven and on earth, sums up the whole display of his greatness by declaring, "it pleased the father that in him all fulness should dwell"—a remarkable expression, which he explains and renders still more emphatic by adding, that, through the blood of his cross, Christ has reconciled all things to God, "whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." What mysterious power Jesus, in virtue of his death, exercises over the inhabitants of heaven, beyond the redeemed of the family of Adam, it is impossible to tell, and it is not necessary to know. It is enough for us to be assured, that, through him alone, can any of the human family find access to the throne of grace, and that none who desire to find that access shall be excluded. Of this fulness do all believers receive, as the evangelist John assures us, and grace for grace. They, like others, were in need of every thing, but he supplies all their spiritual wants; they were spiritually dead, but he died, that, through his death, they might obtain eternal life; they had forfeited the enjoyments of heaven, but he rose again from the grave, and ascended to the right hand of God that he might prepare for them mansions of eternal blessedness in his Father's house; they continue to sin, but he never fails to present, before the throne of grace, the merits of his own perfect obedience, and to obtain mercy to pardon and grace to help them. "Who," asks Paul, "shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us."

It is the last of these blessings, thus emphatically enumerated, which I am now to consider—"who also maketh intercession for us."

An intercessor, in the original sense of the word, signifies simply one

who comes between two parties : it is generally, however, applied to a person coming between an offended party and the offender to plead for pardon. This is the office exercised by Christ at the right hand of God, as is clearly expressed by the apostle John, when he says, " If any man sin, he has an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John ii. 1.

The first question which naturally occurs to any one who turns his serious attention to this most interesting subject is, For whom does Christ intercede ? I answer, that he intercedes only for the "*elect*." Christ can never intercede in vain ; and therefore all for whom he intercedes must be saved at last. By his death he offers pardon and redemption to all ; but those who refuse to accept of this free offer are excluded from every spiritual blessing. By their own act they exclude themselves. For them there is no intercession. In our Lord's intercessory prayer, this is distinctly indicated when he says, " I pray not for the world, but for them which thou has given me."

But these are already pardoned. By the sacrifice of atonement, they are already rescued from endless woe, and, through the imputed merits of the righteous One, they are justified freely, and adopted into the family of God. Why, then, is an intercessor necessary ? If I be a child of God, what is wanting to complete my happiness ?

I ask you, my friends, does a child never offend a kind and judicious parent ? Does he never stand in need of an affectionate friend to intercede for him ? Although I say not that the cases are parallel, yet there is an analogy here which may help to remove the difficulty. Why should we be surprised, that, after we have become new creatures in Christ Jesus—why should we be surprised, whatever may be our gifts and graces as the redeemed of Christ, that a continual intercession is needful for us ? Ah ! my believing brethren, you are not yet free from sin. Your sanctification is begun indeed, but it is not completed. There is still " a law in your members warring against the law of your mind, and bringing you into subjection to the law of sin." Day after day you rebel. Day after day you stand in need of forgiveness ; and therefore you stand in need of a continual intercessor.

This doctrine is strikingly taught by our Lord in a symbolical transaction when he was just about to institute the sacrament of the Supper. Immediately before* presenting his disciples with this typical representation of his vicarious sufferings, he rose from table and washed their feet. When he came to Peter, that zealous disciple, feeling himself altogether unworthy of such extraordinary condescension, and not under-

* In our translation the words are, " supper being ended," but the original will equally well bear to be translated, " supper being come," and this appears, from various considerations, to be the real meaning.

standing the emblematical meaning of the transaction, exclaimed, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." Christ's answer was, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." Upon which Peter immediately retracted his rash refusal, and, with his characteristic fervour, cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Now, observe the Saviour's significant remark on this warm-hearted reply, "He that is washed," that is, "he that has been bathing, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." As if he had said, "What I am now doing, besides affording you an example of humility, is to be understood as a visible emblem of an important part of the great salvation I am about to accomplish. By my sacrifice on the cross, of which I am about to afford you a standing memorial, your sins shall be forgiven—or rather they shall be washed away in my blood. But still, so long as you live, you will not cease to be guilty of transgressions which require the mercy and pardon of a holy God. These may be compared to the mire of the shore by which the feet are defiled after the body has been washed by bathing. For the removal of these pollutions also, a provision is made in my love, of which I have now given you a representation. I shall obtain forgiveness for them. I shall wash them away by my intercession, and then you shall be 'clean every whit.'"

What a representation is here of the "fulness" of Christ! No conceivable blessing is wanting. It is not enough that he should give us the purest precepts, and set before us the most perfect example—it is not enough that he should incite us to the performance of these precepts and the imitation of that example by the most generous motives which can animate the heart of man—it is not enough that he should address our very self-love by the most glorious hopes and the most tremendous terrors—it is not enough even that he should die to redeem us from the guilt of original sin, and of those actual transgressions which we have committed in a state of alienation from him, or that he should bestow upon us the gift of the Holy Spirit to guard, to direct, and to bless us. He knows the perverseness of our nature, and, in addition to all these, and to crown them all, he never ceases to appear before the throne of his Father for us, that, in every new sin we commit, he may be our advocate—from every new temptation to which we may be subjected, he may intercede for our deliverance.

It may possibly be expected that I should say something regarding the manner in which the intercession of Christ is performed. But, on a subject so awfully mysterious, there is danger of presumption in prying into the secret things of God. I cannot tell how it may be with others, but for myself I do freely confess that, in approaching such a subject as this, a reverential fear comes over my mind, which overpowers my faculties and rebukes curiosity. While I feel the necessity of endea-

vouring to be wise to the full extent of what is written, I am deeply impressed with the impiety of any attempt to be wise above what is written. The intercession of Christ, like every other part of the great scheme of redemption, is a doctrine of pure revelation, with regard to which reason has nothing more to do, after ascertaining the inspiration of the record, than merely to discover what "the Spirit saith to the churches." In such a search what is chiefly required is a simple, candid, and child-like disposition. No untamed imagination—no vain-glorious desire of applause—no pride of human learning, can safely be employed in so sacred an enquiry. These may prove fatal snares to others as well as to their possessors.

Scripture, on such a subject, is its own best interpreter. Let us, therefore, bring together and examine some of the passages of holy writ, in which the intercession is mentioned. In the verse which contains our text it is simply declared that Christ "makes intercession for us at the right hand of God." In the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 24.) the same thing is intimated, where it is said that as our Great High Priest "he has entered into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us." The object of this intercession is declared in the First Epistle of John (ii. 1), to which I have already alluded, where we are told "If any man sin he has an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and the unceasing constancy and irresistible power with which he performs this high office, as well as the character of those who are the objects of it, are expressly stated in the seventh chapter of Hebrews (25th verse): "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Again, as to the feelings which he brings to this blessed work, it is said in the same Epistle (Heb. iv. 15), "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" and again, (Heb. ii. 17), "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

This I think is nearly the sum of what we learn from Scripture on this mysterious, but most comfortable doctrine. And what can we desire more for every practical object?

It seems unnecessary at present to attempt any nice distinctions as to the different parts assigned to the divine and human natures of Christ in the office of intercession. These are not dwelt on in the revealed word, and it is enough to know that in the mysterious union of the two natures of God and man, consists all the efficacy of this, as well as of every other particular in the great scheme of redemption.

But it may be proper to enquire for what our Advocate thus prevailingly pleads? Not that the Creator should breathe into us the breath of natural life. This was breathed into our first parent at his creation, and we inherit it because we are descended from him. What our divine advocate pleads for is, that his heavenly Father should bestow upon us that eternal life, with its unspeakable blessings, which he purchased for his believing people by his death. Listen to a specimen of his intercession on earth, by which you may judge of the nature of his advocacy in heaven. "Holy Father! keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are." "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." And again, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." John xvii.

Amazing, unspeakable blessedness, to behold the Redeemer's glory!—to live with him for ever—to love him with his own perfect love. Wonderful union—to be one with each other!—one with Christ!—one with God! For this our Advocate pleads; and he cannot plead in vain. And this is *life*—the life which he has purchased for us by his death—the life which he has gone to prepare for us in heaven.

But I must hasten from this delightful theme, as I have another duty yet to perform. Let us now turn our thoughts to the nature of the sentiments which the doctrine of Christ's intercession is calculated to cherish in the mind of a believer.

The first and strongest of all is a sentiment of gratitude and affection. This, indeed, is an emotion which every part of the gospel scheme tends powerfully to excite in the renewed heart, but it seems to me that there is not one doctrine of revelation that comes home with a warmer and more melting glow, than the doctrine of the intercession. The act of the Son of God's incarnation is past—his life of sorrow is past—his atoning agony is past. The believer is already pardoned—he already enjoys the privileges of a child of God; but on this very day and at this very hour Christ appears at the right hand of God interceding for us. The incarnation, the cross, and the atonement, indicate love unspeakable, and the blessings of redemption demand praises which eternity cannot exhaust; but when with the eye of faith we penetrate beyond the veil, and behold what is even now transacting before the throne of the Father for us—when, on the one hand, we see our sins arraigned continually, in all their vileness and deformity, before the bar of eternal justice—those sins which we are never ceasing to commit—the unholy thoughts we have been cherishing—the idle words we have been uttering—the worldly works we have been doing—with the long black catalogue of neglected duties, and heartless observances—of

scriptures read but not obeyed—of prayers said but not felt—of ordinances celebrated but not improved ; and when, on the other hand, we behold our advocate moved with unquenchable love, standing forward to plead for our forgiveness—stretching forth those hands in our cause, which were erewhile nailed to the cross in atonement for our sins—exhibiting the very prints of the nails, and claiming for us the reward of his own labours of love ; and then, when we see him taking our sins as they rise before the throne, and in the folds of his spotless robe—the robe of his own righteousness—covering them from view for ever—when, by the exercise of strong faith, we realise all this, the sentiments to which such amazing grace gives rise, are, I may truly say, more ardent, more intense, more overpowering, than can spring from any other source.

And this leads me to notice another sentiment which the doctrine of the intercession is calculated to cherish—I mean that of humility.

The very necessity of an intercessor indicates the depravity of the human heart. If it be indeed true, that, notwithstanding all the appeals which the gospel makes to our conscience and affections, to our hopes and fears, to every generous and every selfish principle of the heart, we still cherish low desires and worldly views, and walk unworthy of the high vocation with which we are called—if it does not suffice that the Son of God for us became man, and expiated our transgressions on the cross, and through the Holy Spirit has opened our hearts to know the wonders of redeeming love—if, after all this, we daily rebel, and require a continual intercessor before the throne of a holy God, there cannot assuredly be a more striking proof not only of Divine mercy, but of human guilt ; and if for the one we have cause of gratitude, for the other we have not less cause of humility and penitence. O! how ought we, under such views, to distrust ourselves, to scrutinize our hearts, and to consider our ways. How strictly should we judge our character—how cautiously should we examine, and how entirely should we cast ourselves on the guidance and direction of him whose grace alone is sufficient for us, and whose strength is made perfect in his people's weakness. It does not become that man to be vain of his attainments, or confident in his virtues, who hourly sins, and hourly requires the all-prevailing intercession of the Son of God to avert the just wrath of his heavenly Father. Here we are most affectingly taught that pride was not made for man.

Again, if Christ's intercession reminds us that we are altogether insufficient of ourselves, it also assures us that there is one to whom we may freely and confidently apply. This doctrine the Apostle emphatically teaches in Hebrews iv. 15, 16. Having assured us, that " We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," he

adds emphatically, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We are weak of ourselves, but we are invited to be strong in him, and in the power of his grace. It is not an angel who pleads for us; it is our own flesh and blood—our elder brother. He has himself experienced the force of temptation, and has a fellow-feeling of our infirmities. He remembers his own sorrows and sufferings, and sympathises with ours. There is not a pang which he suffered, nor a sigh which he heaved, nor a tear which he shed, but fills us with encouragement. There is not an expression of pity or of kindness which escaped him, that is not a ground of comfort. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus, still compassionates the griefs of mortality—he, whose intense agony caused the very blood to burst from his body, regards human misery with commiseration—he who prayed for his murderers, will not fail, in his intercession for his friends, to repeat with still more affectionate urgency that ever memorable prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There is, then, a very peculiar confidence in the mercy of God, inspired by Christ's intercession. We cannot doubt of God's willingness to save us, when we think of the means of salvation which he has so liberally bestowed upon us. Reflection on the incarnation and sufferings of Christ induced an Apostle to say, "If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things;" and what additional ground of trust and security do we derive from the assurance, that "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." Or, to reason in the words of the Apostle himself, "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life."

Brethren! the intercession of Christ can never fail. Not only is he man to pity us—that man whom "the Father heareth always," but he is also God to execute whatever his pity has planned. His Almighty power is exerted to protect and to bless us. Speaking of his servants, he says, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." And he adds, as an evidence of his power to do this, "I and my Father are one."

What undoubting confidence then may fill the heart of the believer! Unerring power and wisdom unite with the tenderest compassion and most unwearied love in effecting his salvation. If God be thus for us, who can be against us. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

SERMON LXXVI.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD PROMISED TO HIS CHURCH.

BY THE REV. THOMAS GUTHRIE, EDINBURGH.

(Preached at the opening of Free St John's, Edinburgh, 18th April 1845.)

"In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."—
Exodus xx. 24.

THIS promise—this very precious and very gracious promise—was in the first instance given to Moses, and through him to the children of Israel; as we have it in the 21st and 22d verses of this same chapter; "And the people stood afar off. And Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel."

And the question with you and me this day is, Can *we* serve ourselves heirs to Moses and Israel—heirs of this blessed promise, in the house where we are now for the first time assembled? Above the door of the tabernacle, and on the lintels of the temple in Shiloh, and on Zion, *they* might have engraved that sentence; and the question is, Might *we* chisel them above the doors of this church, as one of those places of which the Lord has said, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee?"

It is very true that that promise was first given to Moses, and to the Mosaic economy, and that there were peculiarities in that economy which have now passed away. The fact is, the Church was then in a state of childhood: it went through the discipline of childhood, and was attired in the dress of childhood, and it learned by types and figures, as a child does in painted pictures, the lessons of gospel truth; and now to restore to the Church of the living God, to force on the Church of Christ at this day the peculiarities of a bygone system, were (to say no worse of it) as absurd a thing as to dress out a full grown man in the habiliments of his boyish days. And so Christianity, now no child, having put away what belonged to childhood, her forms few and her worship spiritual, says with Paul, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." And so, to go no farther for an illustration than the verse which contains my text—it speaks of an altar and sacrifices. There is no altar now. Where is the altar? Where is the priest, and the fragrant incense, and

the smoking sacrifice? They are put away. There is no stone altar—there is no earthen altar—and there is no priest at all in this house, but the chosen of God. And why? There is no altar, because no sacrifice—and no sacrifice, because Jesus, the only Priest, the High Priest of Heaven, and the only Priest of earth—Jesus the victim, Jesus the altar, Jesus the temple, and Jesus the priest, “hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

You will observe, then, brethren, that the altar is away—the burnt-offerings are away—the peace-offerings are away—the sheep are away—the oxen are away—but is the promise of my text away with them? No!—and the reason is, because there is no necessary connection between the promise of the verse and what precedes it. They have perished, but it shall endure; and this promise, like a beauteous and fertilising stream, has flowed through the Church down through all succeeding ages. It was not the property of Moses. They talk of church property! This is the church property, the best property a church can have—property Parliament cannot give, nor violence take away—it is a property we have within this church; for what says the Saviour? God said to Moses, “In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” And the ascending Saviour said, “Lo, I am with you *ALWAY*,” even in point of *space*, as well as *time*; even to the end of the world! Jesus has repeated the glorious and blessed promise given to Moses, of this house—a house we consecrate to his name—a house we dedicate to his honour. He says, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” And without farther introduction, having shown that the promise of my text is one the Church still possesses, there are two or three things connected with that promise to which I shall now proceed to turn your attention.

1. To the extent of the promise.

2. To the blessing of the promise.

“In all places where I record my name”—that is its *extent*. “I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee”—that is its *blessing*. Observe,

I. *The extent of the promise*.—Now the text does not say simply, “in all places,” but “in all places *where I record my name* I will come unto thee and bless thee.” The dew of heaven’s blessing, like that wrung from the fleece of Gideon, is only to fall on some places—it is to be wet in this place, and desert dry in that. And, brethren, the question we have to do with is this, *What* does God mean by the expression, “Where I record my name?” Where, and what are the places where God records His name? Now the verse, of which my text forms

a part, answers the question. God here instructs Moses what kind of altar to raise—what kind of offerings to bring—what sacrifices to offer; and having done so—having told him of the altar, and sacrifices, and offerings, he then follows it up by saying, manifestly referring to what has been already said, “In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.” And it is plain to the humblest capacity that the place where Jehovah recorded his name was just the place where His altar stood—the place where the lamb bled—the place where God was worshipped according to his own appointment.

Now, to go back for one moment to the days of ceremonial ordinances, we find that of all the countries of the world there was but *one*, and of all the places in that country there were but two, where God recorded his name. God now records his name in every church, that is, in every gospel church. God records his name in as many places as he has churches where Christ is preached; but there was a time when there was but one country, and but two places, where God recorded His name. That country was the land of Canaan, and the two places in that country were, 1st, Shiloh, where, to use David’s figure, the ark dwelt in curtains. 2d, Jerusalem, where the sacrifice continued to be offered till Christ himself came to do away sacrifices, and, breaking down the barriers, to let the full flood of the knowledge of saving mercy and saving grace spread over the wide world. *Where does he record it now?* God records his name now *wherever*, and among *whosoever*, of every nation—nay, we rejoice not only of every nation, but every denomination, where He, of whom that smoking altar, and yon bleeding, groaning, suffering lamb was but the type and sign—I mean to say, in *every place* where Jesus Christ and him crucified are preached. God once recorded His name where the altar was seen. Now, where the cross is seen—not the cross in painted colours, not the cross in stained glass windows, not a cross in senseless stone, but the living cross, the gospel cross, the sermon cross, the saving cross, the cross of gospel sacrifices—where, in fact, the eyes of sinners are turned, not to the robe he wore on the cross, and which blinded men pretend now to possess, but to the veritable robe of His own righteousness. Not, I say, to the robes Christ wore on his way to the cross, but the robe that he wore on the cross—the robe of his own righteousness—arrayed in which all-guilty and hell-deserving man stands innocent in the eyes of a Holy God! Shew me the place where Christ is preached as God’s only Son and man’s only Saviour—where the minister points to the only sacrifice which taketh away the sin of the world—that is the place where God records his name. The promise of God is in fact given to a *gospel church*, and it is no gospel church unless Christ crucified is preached

in it—it is no gospel sermon unless Christ is its sun and centre ; and I do not care whether a man be ordained by the hands of a bishop or a Presbytery—I care not whether he be chosen by the people or otherwise—I care not whether he be arrayed in black gown or white—I say that man is no gospel minister who does not resolve with the apostle Paul, “ I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Brethren, give me a church where Christ is preached as God’s only Son and man’s only Saviour, where the living finger of the minister, true as needle to the pole, points to Christ, and, irrespective of all external circumstances, wherever and in what place soever they meet—whether on the barren heath or on a marble floor—beneath a gilded ceiling or the canopy of heaven—in dungeon dark or mountain high—whether it be a band of peers or a band of peasants, driven by the iron hand of oppression back on the throne of their God—brethren, give me that, and I say *there* God will fulfil his promise, “ In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.”

What do we come here for ? “ What dost thou here, Elijah ? ” Why left you yon place and came to this ? Because we believed the promise. In faith in that promise, we crossed that street, and have now pitched our tent within these walls. We have not shifted our ground much, and our principles not at all. This is not a new church. We are but an old church in a new building. We have left our goods, but not our God. Lose what we may, we have not lost this promise—so long as by the grace of God—so long as we have Jesus Christ and him crucified—and I will take leave to say, not only Jesus crucified, but Jesus *crowned* as well as *crucified*—I say, brethren, as long as that doctrine is preached—and may these walls perish before any other doctrine is preached within them—so long, I say, will heaven send down the blessing of that promise, “ In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”

II. I would now turn your attention, in the *second* place, to the *blessing of the promise*. We have seen its extent—we would now see its blessing ; and there are two things which, with all possible brevity, I would touch upon. *1st*, God’s presence—“ I will come unto thee ; ” *2dly*, God’s blessing—“ and I will bless thee.”

Now, there is a very wide difference between God’s essential presence and his gracious presence. As the creator, and governor, and judge of all things, God is everywhere present. God is present in heaven and present in hell. “ If I ascend up into heaven thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there ; if I take the wings of

the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Now, it is not of that essential presence that my text speaks, but his *gracious* presence—I mean of God present to call, to constrain, to convert—I mean God present to wash in the blood of his Son, and to sanctify in the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; and as you have seen, in the workshop of the lapidary, a jewel cut and polished on the wheel, so the spirit of God is polishing and preparing souls in this house to shine like diamonds in the crown of Jesus. We sometimes hear of the consecration of churches; but the best consecration I know is a present Spirit. The presence of Christ only consecrates and constitutes a church. There cannot be a living body without a living head. A man dies if you deprive him of his head. Deprive a church of its head, and it is dead. There cannot be a court without a king, and there cannot be a church without Christ in it. It is not the marble floor and gilded ceilings—it is not the gorgeous furniture of a palace that make its proprietor a king. These not a sovereign but a slave may possess. It is the presence of a sovereign that makes a palace, and a king is a king however plain his dress or mean his dwelling place. And, in the same way, a church does not depend on externals. I have seen a church in a place as mean as the stable where the child was born. The babe was in the stable—the king was in the Church; and wise men were they who left Herod's palace—turned their back on the temple, and followed yon star of heaven, and sought their King under a stable-door; and these are wise men still who, following the star of conscience, will seek the gospel in a stable and honour true religion when, like her Lord, she is driven to stable, sea shore, and mountain. There was no room for Christ in the inn, and therefore his mother went to a stable; and sometimes when there is no room for Christ in gorgeous palaces and in the society of the great, you will find him in the meanest places and in the lowest company.

Now, brethren, it is this presence which we desire and value. We have no objection to the presence of the great—we quarrel not with that—we are glad to see the great, the good, and religion adorning and gilding with celestial light the very pinnacles of society; but the presence we value—the presence we pray for, and are here alone to care for, is the presence promised in my text. I have missed some who in days of old worshipped with us; and God forbid that I should say that in none of them our Free Church misses a valued man; but God knows we shall miss none if Christ is with us, and if Christ is not with us, it matters not who is with us. There will be no sinner saved—no soul sanctified—no prodigal reclaimed—no good done without Christ? The prophet's

servant stood in the chamber of the dead, and he laid his master's staff on the dead face, and death sat on the pillow at the dead boy's head, and laughed these ministers to scorn. And so Satan would laugh to scorn all the ministers of the gospel. Talk of the minister's zeal! Where will you find zeal or eloquence like Satan's? Where will you find persuasion like the Tempter's? Who is such a master of the human passions and human heart? Satan will sit in this assembly, though Paul with all his eloquence, and John with all his love, and Peter with all his ardour were here—Satan would sit in this house and laugh them all to scorn. Save Christ, there is none can break the spell of sin, or save a soul within these walls! Then, brethren, what a blessed promise, "I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee!" I know many who would not come into a Free Church—who would not sit down at a communion table in a Free Church. Blessed Lord, if *thou* wilt come, we shall not miss *them*. When man meets me, and looks defiance in my face, thy kindness is better than theirs. Blessed Lord, thou wilt come—then come Lord Jesus, come to save—come every Sabbath into our assembly. Lift up your heads, O ye gates—be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. There may be some soul here who will never hear the gospel again. I will ask you for your gold and silver this day, but I protest before God in heaven, I would rather ask you for your soul—I had rather one soul were saved, than *thousands* were poured into the treasury. Come then, Lord Jesus—come, to save that soul, and fulfil thy promise, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

I will now, with all possible brevity, turn your attention, in the *last place*, to the blessing of this promise. God not only says, "I will come unto thee," but "I will bless thee." Now, brethren, it cannot be too deeply impressed upon all our minds, the mind either of preacher or people—I say, I cannot feel it too much, and you cannot feel it too much, that all the blessings, all the benefits of public ordinances, turn not on who is in the pulpit—that is a very small matter—but it does matter a great deal if *God* is in the church; and I must say there is too little heed given to that. People ask *who* is to preach? as if the preacher were everything, when he is nothing. God says, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Nor do I know anything more damaging to a minister's usefulness than when people put the servant in the master's room. God is everything, and man nothing, but in His hands the meanest instruments are mighty, the most foolish things are wise. He has scattered His enemies with the breath of a trumpet. God breaks the rock with the feeblest rod, and from the mouth of many a babe—a man in the pulpit, yet a babe

in *Christ*—hath He ordained strength. And it is our comfort, brethren, when we know and feel that we have most miserably preached the gospel, that we have done vast injustice to the cause of *Christ*—I say it is a minister's comfort to know, when he comes with a sermon no better than the barley bread and few small fishes of the mountain fare—that if *Christ* bless the sermon, *Christ's* blessing will make little go far, and with poorer fare will feed and feast the hungry soul.

I pray you then, brethren, give all heed to that blessed promise, "I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." Ah! unless God bless the house, unless "God build the house, they labour in vain that build it." I may preach to my dying day, but unless God bless you, dear brethren, the blessing of man will go for nothing. I might as well address the dead as the living now around me. May God give that blessing "which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow."

Brethren, there is a promise here, you know what is joined to a promise? you know what takes hold of a promise? The *promise must be turned into a prayer*. Prayer sucks the life of a promise. Prayer takes the promise, and draws it into the man that prays. Prayer draws water from salvation's deepest wells. Prayer takes the promise, and presents it at the throne of God, and what God has said to us in promise we are to carry back to God in prayer. Prayer rises empty on the wings of promise—it soars above the skies, and when the believer comes back again to earth, returns loaded with heavenly blessings. And, first and foremost of all things, this is what I would ask you to do for this house. I would ask you to pray with me—to pray now, to pray afterwards, that the promise of that text may be fulfilled in this house. God has made this house a house of promise, do you make it a house of many prayers. Ah! remember it when you go before the king—when you go to Court, not an earthly court, I don't mean that—we have nothing to do with an earthly court now—I neither ask nor desire high earthly countenance for our Zion, but I ask you to go to the court of Heaven, and when you are before the throne of the king, remember this house—remember the man that preaches in it—remember the many precious souls that assemble here every Sabbath-day. Many of them have much need to be prayed for—many need to be pitied—some of them fainting for hunger—some of them dying in their sins—and some of them, it may be, hearing the gospel for the very last time. Oh! that man is well worth praying for who is standing on the very brink of eternity and sees not the hell into which he is to drop. *Christ* offers him a crown, but he repells and refuses it. Brethren, I beseech you to pray that God may meet with us here. When I think of how many children dead born and never brought to life—dead fathers and mo-

there—how many dead souls, dead in trespasses and sins—when I think of how many there are dying in their sins, and not only going the way of all the living, but going the way of all the lost—who have been prayed for in vain, and who have been preached to in vain—when I look up to heaven and see the crown they refuse—and when I look down to hell and see that dreadful place where the gospel is never preached and mercy never offered—I beseech you, dear brethren—sinners—saints—I beseech you by every consideration of Christian kindness, for the sake of the men perishing at your side—I beseech you, for the sake of such, to pray that God would be with us to bless us here. May this house be the birth-place of many a soul—the field of many a victory—the scene of many a conversion—the threshold of glory—the gate of heaven. May it ever be a stronghold of the truth—may it ever be a watch-tower on the walls of Zion—may the flag of freedom ever wave over it. And when the tongue that now speaks is silent in the lonely grave, and the place that now knows you shall know you no more for ever, brethren, may the voice of truth ever sound from this pulpit, and ever echo within these walls, till (which God in mercy long avert) till these walls perish in the wreck of all things. This house *shall* perish if no other fire burn it. The fire that burns the waters, and dissolves the earth and elements with fervent heat, shall burn it; but God be thanked we have a better life, and a better house—a house in heaven of surpassing celestial beauty. Human skill never planned it—human hands never built it. And my heart's desire for you all, brethren, is that we may meet above the skies; and that within *that* house there may be none missing of all the company that are here this day. May God bless his truth, and to his name be the praise.

SERMON LXXVII.

THE BELLEVER LONGING TO SEE JESUS.

Preached on a Communion Sabbath.

BY THE REV. JAMES GLEN, A.M., BENHOLME.

"We would see Jesus."—JOHN xii. 21.

THE Greeks who spoke these words were doubtless proselytes to the Jewish religion. It is well known that many of that class of people were in the habit of going up to Jerusalem at the great annual festivals, to take that share in the worship of God which was permitted to strangers in the court of the Gentiles. Acts ii. 10, and viii. 27. They had heard of the fame of Jesus, and perhaps had been present on some occasion when he addressed the vast multitudes that crowded around him; and the result was, what is here intimated, a strong desire to be introduced to Jesus, and to enjoy for a little his private society. For the accomplishing of this end they applied to the apostle Philip, with whom, it is thought, they might have had some previous acquaintance, from the proximity of their places of abode in early life. Their application was made in the most respectful manner; and, whatever their motives might be, it was not to be hastily and summarily rejected. But still Philip did not feel himself at liberty to comply with the request on his own responsibility. He knew that Jesus had hitherto confined his intercourse almost exclusively to his kindred according to the flesh, and was apprehensive that an abrupt introduction of these "strangers to the commonwealth of Israel" might be displeasing to his beloved Master. He therefore thought it prudent to consult Andrew, his friend and fellow countryman (chap. i. 44), before taking any step in the matter; and then the two, after due deliberation, made a united representation of the case to Jesus.

It is foreign to our present purpose to enter on the lengthened and momentous reply which Jesus made to this representation. It is probable, as we never read that Jesus refused any other application, that the men were introduced, and that the answer was spoken in their

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hearing. For the present our object shall be to consider the words before us, as beautifully descriptive of what should be the prevailing desire of intending communicants this day. It is perfectly allowable, we apprehend, to use the words, in the way of accommodation, as expressing the united request of a whole congregation on the morning of a Communion Sabbath—a request addressed silently by them to their pastor when he appears in the midst of them on such an occasion, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” We wish not, at a season of so high expectation, to be entertained with minute criticisms in Scripture language, with nice distinctions on points of theological controversy, or with a burst of flowery declamation on some subject calculated merely to touch the natural feelings. Our aim on the morning of a Communion Sabbath is more specific and elevated, and more befitting the affecting circumstances in which we are now placed. “We would see Jesus:” and, if you cannot help us to this sublime and soul-reviving sight, we shall regard our preparatory exercises as fruitless, and our sitting at the Lord’s table as an empty formality. We are aware, indeed, that you are but a human instrument, and that by no might of your own can you draw aside the veil, and reveal the blessed Jesus to our admiring eyes. But still you may assist us in the exalted aim which we entertain. We depend on your earnest endeavours to give us this day such Scriptural views of Christ as may tend, by the blessing from on high, to brighten our perception of his beauty, and move our souls to “follow hard after him,” so that, in the breaking of bread, he may draw near and manifest himself to us.

Now, supposing that such are your prevailing sentiments and desires at this moment, I am ready to meet you in a corresponding frame of mind; and it will give me the highest delight to be in any measure instrumental in leading you to a realising, spiritual, and saving view of Christ. It were worth the labour of a life-time to be honoured to bring one sinner into a state of friendship with Jesus, to make one individual savingly acquainted with Him who is “the way, and the truth, and the life.”

I. Let us then, in dependence on Divine teaching, enquire, What is implied in seeing Jesus?—that is, in the sense in which the expression must now be understood. It does not mean that we are to see him literally, sensibly, face to face, with the bodily eyes. This is impossible; for Jesus “is ascended up” where he was before his incarnation, and “the heavens must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things.” Nor does this language intimate that we are to have a supernatural vision of Christ, such as Paul had on his way to Damascus,

or as John had in the Isle of Patmos. No, my friends, the language has no such meaning. The one kind of seeing of Jesus is not possible, and the other is not now to be expected. And we may add that neither of these is needful. All that is necessary for the refreshment and consolation of the Christian may be obtained without the sensible sight, or the miraculous vision of the Lord. Many who saw Christ in the flesh, saw him but to increase their guilt, and to ensure their condemnation. They saw and believed not. They saw and wilfully rejected the Saviour. The seeing of Christ in the body is not essential to faith and salvation. "Blessed," says Jesus, "are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—Chap. xx. 29. And the apostle Peter (1 Ep. i. 8) tells us of some who had not seen the Son of God, and yet not only believed in him, but "rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Under the gospel we are to know no man after the flesh: "Yea," says Paul (2 Cor. v. 16), "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know him no more," that is, in this sensible and common way. "Therefore," adds he with mighty emphasis, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," or, rather, there is a new creation. The Holy Spirit has come to that man, and created him anew in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit has wrought faith in the heart of such a one, and thus united him to Jesus; and, at the same time, has so opened the eyes of his understanding as to enable him to obtain a spiritual view of the unseen Saviour, and a clear perception of the leading features of his holy character. It is, therefore, a spiritual view of Christ that is here intended; such a view as the renovated mind can realise without the aid of the bodily senses. Some such view, in short, as Moses had of Jehovah himself, when it is said of him that he "endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. xi. 27.)

II. What views of Christ are to be expected when the believer sees him in the sense just described? Here, my friends, we are in danger of darkening counsel by words without knowledge; for it is but a small way into the mystery of Christ that we can pretend to have penetrated; and yet "what we have seen and heard" we would anxiously "declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." O that we could add, with assured confidence, as the result of a sweet and habitual experience, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ!"

It may be profitable to the believer, when seated at a Communion Table, to take a comprehensive view of Christ in the various aspects in which he is set before us in Scripture—to fix the eye of the mind upon him in his original dignity as the eternal Son of the Father, the bright-

ness of his glory, and the express image of his person—in his state of abasement as the Lord's servant and the sinners' surety—and in his state of exaltation in our nature, reigning a Prince and a Saviour, and Head over all things to the Church, which is his body. It will be at once a humbling and an encouraging exercise, in this season of near-approach to Jesus, to trace his wondrous history from his birth in Bethlehem, to the time when he was taken up to heaven in the presence of his disciples. We shall see, as we proceed, an astonishing mixture of humiliation and dignity, of degradation and glory, in the life of Jesus. He was born in a stable, and yet his birth was announced by angels!—he was cradled in a manger, and yet his lowly abode was pointed out by a star from heaven!—and though seemingly an outcast from human society, he was worshipped by the wise and the wealthy of this world. He was sweetly submissive to Joseph and Mary in their humble station, and yet he was wiser than all the Jewish doctors. He was as much superior to John, as he who is from heaven is above him, who is merely of the earth, and yet he condescended to be baptised by his earthly forerunner. He was undistinguished by any personal glory above the throng that came to John for baptism, and yet he was marked out by God as the Divine Redeemer, by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and by an audible voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was so poor that he had not where to lay his head, and yet he fed the multitudes who attended his ministry. He was despised and rejected of men, and yet he wielded amongst them the power of Omnipotence, healing the sick, ruling over all the elements of nature, casting out devils, and raising the dead. He was crucified between two thieves as the vilest malefactor of the three, and yet he took one of them to the kingdom of glory, as a trophy of his atoning death. He was put to death, and yet he was the Prince of life. He was laid in the cold grave, but speedily raised again by the glory of the Father. He was once mocked and spit upon by sinful men, now all the angels of God worship him. Once he pleaded for himself on earth that the bitter cup of suffering might pass from him, now he is our ever-prevailing advocate with the Father. And this same Jesus, who was taken up to heaven in the sight of his disciples, shall come again in a very different form from that in which he was seen on earth, and accompanied with a very different retinue from that which attended him in the days of his humiliation: he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire—he shall come attended with ten thousand of his saints—he will come in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, and of the holy angels. And then every eye shall see him, when it is too late for multitudes to see him as their Saviour.

Now, my friends, the believer, in running hastily over such particulars as these, will obtain, through Divine teaching, something like a definite perception of various features of the Redeemer's character. And, on an occasion like this, he will not fail to seek a realising view of Christ in his three great offices. As a prophet, he will perceive that Jesus is infinitely wise and skilful, able to enlighten his dark mind in the knowledge of Divine truth, and fully to instruct him in the way of salvation. As a priest, he will be reminded that Jesus is already his propitiation, and now his ever-prevailing intercessor. As a king, he will recognise in Jesus his Lord and Master, ruling over him with the sceptre of his love, and subduing all his enemies. And as he thus muses, his spiritual vision may be so strengthened that he may see in Jesus a complete Saviour, able to save to the uttermost, and willing to save the chief of sinners.

And Oh, my friends, the most joyful sight of all will be to behold Jesus as our own Saviour. How delightful to be able to use the appropriating language of Paul, "Jesus loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my Lord*." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." How cold and cheerless the language of Baalam, "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh." Jesus manifests himself to the believer even here. He brings him into the banqueting house, and gives him such discoveries of his excellency and all-sufficiency, compassion and love, that the adoring communicant is enabled to dismiss his fears, and to claim Jesus as his own Saviour; he, in some faint degree, sees the King in his beauty, and owns him as his own Lord and Master. O seek such a view of Christ this day. All short of this will leave you in darkness and discomfort.

But some may be ready to indulge in a spirit of distrust and despondency, and to say, May such miserable formalists as we ever expect to see Jesus? Yes, my friends, you may. But not while you remain indifferent. You must bestir yourselves, and put forth strong desire, and use strenuous exertion. See what these Greeks did. They left a distant part of the country, and undertook a tedious and toilsome journey, that they might worship the living God in preference to the dumb idols whom they had originally served. And when they came to Jerusalem and found the whole city astir during the triumphal entry of Jesus, (Verse 12, &c.) and had reason to expect from him something better than even the Jewish religion, to which they had for some time conformed, they used the most likely means to be introduced to Jesus, that they might learn from his own lips that system of

religion which he taught. Their anxious inquiry was, "We would see Jesus."

Now, you must imitate this example, and in that case we can give you abundant reason to hope that your desire will be accomplished. Remember that Jesus was sent forth by the Father to be a light to the Gentiles, and to be for salvation to the ends of the earth. Remember that Jesus was lifted up upon the cross, and is still proclaimed in the preaching of the gospel, for the very purpose of drawing all men to himself. Remember his own words of sweetest invitation, "Behold me, behold me!" "Look unto me, and be ye saved!" "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Remember the words of John the baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God." Believe these words and comply with them. Turn your thoughts heavenward, and fix the eye of faith on Jesus. Remember that the Holy Spirit is the glorifier of Christ, and that he is ever ready to take of the things of Christ and show them to the soul of the Christian. Seek his Divine teaching, and you may soon know, in your own experience, that Jesus is unspeakably precious—"the chiefest among ten thousands, and altogether lovely."

III. Let us now enquire in what way, or by what means, such views of Christ are to be obtained. And we say at once, that it is by the aid of the Holy Spirit. It is he who enables us to see Christ in the spiritual sense of which we now speak. And this he does chiefly in two ways—by means of faith in the word of God, and by means of faith in partaking of the Lord's Supper.

1. By means of faith in the word of God; and *that* either read or preached. The Bible contains a full delineation of Christ's person, character, and offices; a full description of what Christ was in himself from eternity, or what he became on our account, and of what he now is in his state of exaltation and glory. But the eyes of our understandings are blind by nature, so that we are unable by our own unaided efforts to obtain any thing like an adequate perception of the Divine glory and beauty of Christ. We therefore need the effectual teaching, and the supernatural illumination of the Holy Spirit, before we can be persuaded to look towards Christ at all, or see him so as he can be seen on this side of heaven. All that is needful for obtaining a distinct apprehension of Christ is contained in that blessed volume which testifies of Jesus; and all that we want, is faith to receive and rest on the truth, the certainty, the reality of that testimony. Now, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to work faith in the soul, and by means of that faith to enable the believer to realise the glowing descriptions of the majesty, loveliness, and preciousness of Jesus. The man who is taught by the

Spirit will search the Scriptures with earnest prayer for His promised guidance. And on some favoured occasions, as he peruses the sacred page, and sees the glorious things that are spoken of Emmanuel, God in our nature, he is enabled to have a clear and impressive view of the truth and reality of what he reads—he, as it were, loses sight of the mere words and sentences that are before his bodily eyes, and he lifts the eyes of his mind to the throne of God, and has at least some faint perception of the inexpressible beauty and excellence of the glorified Redeemer; and, ravished with the glorious sight, he inwardly exclaims, “Thou art fairer than the children of men.” “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye,” the eye of my faith, “seeth thee.”

Or, such a one listens to the preaching of the word, and mingling faith with the hearing of it, Jesus is again revealed to his mind in a clear and vivid form, such as no mere human description could set before him. He sees and realizes what is concealed from the careless hearers around him. Now, in both of these cases, this is the Spirit's teaching. He is enabling the earnest reader and the earnest hearer of the Word to form distinct and vivid conceptions of what he reads or hears. The Holy Spirit is either for the first time working faith in the man's heart, or, what is perhaps more likely, he is strengthening the confirmed Christian's faith, and elevating it to an unusually lively exercise, so that it is performing with blessed effect its appropriate function in giving a visible form to unseen objects. Precious faith wrought in the soul by the Spirit of truth, is bringing the Saviour nigh, and enabling the devout worshipper to “behold his beauty,” while he “inquires in his temple;” and to “see his power and his glory, so as he has seen him,” on former occasions, “in the sanctuary.”

2. The Holy Spirit enables the believer to see Christ by means of faith in partaking of the Lord's Supper. In the former instances, the desired effect was produced by means of faith in statements brought before the mind in reading or hearing the Word. In this case the same effect is produced in the experience of the believing communicant, through the instrumentality of sensible signs presented to the bodily eyes. Here we behold wonderful condescension on the part of Jesus, in instituting the ordinance of the Supper; and wonderful adaptation of means to our present state of infirmity, in making the simple elements of bread and wine effectual in conveying to the mind the most sublime, refreshing, and transporting views of “him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” The believer knows by experience that the external symbols employed in the Lord's Supper, have a most powerful influence in enabling the Christian to realize the truth of

Christ's incarnation, atoning death, and victory over hell and the grave. O how many of the Lord's people have more impressive and affecting views of Christ crucified, and of Christ risen again, at his own table, than on any other occasion whatever !

"This do in remembrance of me !" Who can observe this dying command of Jesus, without going, in believing contemplation, to the garden of Gethsemane, and witnessing the mysterious agony of the holy Jesus—without going to the cross of Calvary, and seeing the blood streaming from the crucified Saviour—without going to the grave of Joseph, and seeing the Prince of life laid "in the lower parts of the earth"—without going to the various scenes where Christ showed himself alive "after his passion ;" and especially to that secluded apartment where Christ appeared suddenly in the midst of his disciples, and in proof of his identity, "showed unto them his hands and his side ?" O what a sight is here ! Jesus "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." The Son of God wounded and pierced for the sin of his people ; nay, says the believing communicant, more affecting still, wounded and pierced *for me*. Here I have gazed on the innocent sufferer "bearing my sins in his own body on the tree," until my eye has affected my heart. My unbelieving thoughts are dissipated—my hard heart is melted. I see in the blood of Jesus a remedy for all my spiritual maladies—I see in Jesus himself an all-sufficient Saviour. Holy Jesus, I renew my engagements to be thine. Thou hast come near to me in the breaking of bread, and thy Spirit has shown me thy glorious perfections. I am no longer my own. Thou King of Glory, I give thee the throne of my heart.

IV. Let us now briefly notice some of the ends for which we should desire to see Jesus.

1. To know more of him. Our views of Jesus are at the best exceedingly low and defective. But, if we are the friends of Jesus, we shall eagerly seek after higher degrees of that knowledge of him which is life eternal. Paul put forth the most strenuous efforts to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. And at the Communion Table the believer may obtain such clear and exalted views of Christ in a few moments, as he could not obtain by months of secret study, or by the mere hearing of the word. He longs, therefore, to have realising views of Christ, that he may become better acquainted with the glory of his person, his divine excellencies, his matchless love, his unsearchable riches. And when he obtains his desire, his joyful exclamation is, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend."

2. To ask from him all spiritual blessings. Jesus is held forth in the gospel as full of grace and truth—as possessed of all that can minister to the present wants of the believer, or fit him for the glories of the heavenly state. And as the various classes of afflicted ones came and spread their respective maladies before Jesus, in the days of his flesh, and implored his gracious interposition, so does the needy suppliant now apply in faith and prayer, for the healing of all his spiritual diseases, and for the abundant supply of all his spiritual necessities—for the remission of all his sins, and the strengthening of all his Christian graces. Lord remember me, now that thou art come to thy kingdom. Wash away my sins in thy precious blood. Put on me the wedding garment, the robe of thy unspotted righteousness. Increase my faith, and rekindle the flame of divine love in my bosom. Deepen my convictions of sin, and help me to mourn, after a godly sort, over my many backslidings. Give me the full assurance of hope unto the end. Give me thy Spirit, that my body may be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Be thou my shepherd, and I shall not want. Feed me with the hidden manna. Keep my feet in the way of holiness, and perfect that which concerneth me. And O ! forsake me not, when I come to the valley of the shadow of death, but conduct me in safety to the land of rest, where I shall see thee face to face, and “be satisfied with thy likeness.”

3. To hold communion with Jesus, that is, to hold intimate and endearing intercourse and fellowship with him as our chosen and beloved Saviour. This cannot be done under a sense of distance and absence. The believer must see Jesus spiritually present before he can hold such sweet fellowship with him. And when Jesus does manifest himself, the believer does not fail to disclose, with all confidence, the state of his heart. He will unbosom, as into the ear of a tried friend, his many cares, and sorrows, and disquietudes. He will acknowledge his many secret and presumptuous sins, and complain of the root of bitterness, the remainder of indwelling corruption that still cleaves to him. And yet he will venture to speak of a prevailing love to the Saviour, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” And thou knowest that I desire to love thee yet more ardently. And he will at the same moment pour out his heart in gratitude and praise for all that Jesus has done for him and in him. He will “thank Christ Jesus” as Paul did, that he has brought one so vile out of the horrible pit and miry clay; and that he has filled one who was lately an heir of hell, with the hope of heaven. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” And on such an occasion as this, Jesus may renew the tokens of his compassion and love. He may inspire the worthy communicant with such confidence in him, and with such an

assurance of acceptance with him, that he is cheered and animated, as if he heard the voice of Jesus whispering in his ear, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I and have the keys of hell and of death." "Yea, I have loved thee am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore, with an everlasting love." "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

4. The believer wishes to see Jesus for the purpose of renewing the dedication of himself to him. This is a transaction that ought to be frequently repeated. Jesus expects it of his disciples, and they are most ready to comply. "Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him." And David, having a single heart, most cheerfully consented. The genuine disciple of Christ is actuated by a similar spirit. He has already chosen Christ as his Lord and Master, and has placed himself under the authority of his righteous sceptre. And feeling, as he too often does, that his resolutions to lead a life of willing and devoted obedience are apt to wax feeble, he longs for an opportunity for renewing his engagements to be the Lord's. And the table of communion, where Jesus presides, is the fittest opportunity. There the solemn vow is renewed, and the heart once more devoted to Jesus. And if faith is in lively exercise—if Jesus is *seen* in his divine majesty and glory—the surrender is made without reluctance or reservation. Now, this is what you are expected to do this day. You are to seek a believing view of Jesus, and to make yourselves over to him as your rightful Lord and King. You are to be Christ's entirely, and Christ's for ever. There is to be no rival, and no other Lord is to have dominion over you. And I can tell you, for your encouragement, that he is the kindest master ever you served. His service is perfect freedom. His "yoke is easy, and his burden is light." His "commandments are not grievous." On the contrary, they are the choice and delight of the regenerated soul. "His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace."

V. Although there should be danger of repetition, we cannot close without mentioning more particularly some of the blessed effects of a believing view of Jesus.

1. The sight will be delightful and enrapturing. It will fill the soul with wonder and with joy. No heart can conceive the beauty of a Saviour in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. A believing view of such a Saviour is indeed a ravishing sight, and cannot fail to fill the soul with joy unspeakable. See what overwhelming emotions the sight of Jesus, after his resurrection, excited in the breasts of his

disciples, although he appeared to them merely in his human form. On one occasion we read, that, for a moment, "they believed not for joy, and wondered." Luke xxiv. 41. And, on another occasion, it is said, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." John xx. 20. The Lord open your eyes this day to see Jesus, and you will go from his table rejoicing.

2. Such a view of Christ will be satisfying and encouraging. Here is a Saviour with every possible qualification. He is made of God unto us "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "His name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The believer is complete in him. Faith's view of Christ assures him of this, and is the ground of solid and lasting satisfaction.

3. It is a transforming sight. He who sees Jesus by faith, longs to be like him; and by the power of the indwelling spirit he is gradually assimilated into his blessed image. The Apostles were so different from the rest of the world that men "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." The believer "grows up in all things into Christ, who is his head." He "walks as Christ also walked." He "purifies himself as Christ is pure." "Beholding in the face of Jesus, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image from glory to glory." This is practical religion. And there is none else that deserves the name. Jesus is the perfect model. The believer who sees him, and who loves him, strives to resemble him. And this is just to lead a life of new obedience. This is to be holy.

4. It is an engaging and attractive sight. They who have seen Jesus long to be with him and to enjoy his society. His presence is sweet, and his converse refreshing. "His name is as ointment poured forth," and his voice is most sweet. "The voice of my beloved!" is the abrupt and enraptured exclamation of the spouse of Christ. And the ardent longing for permanent and closer fellowship is beautifully expressed in such language as the following:—"Draw me; we will run after thee." "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth." "The king is held in the galleries." "I held him, and would not let him go." "Lord," said the enraptured disciple on the Mount of Transfiguration, "it is good for us to be here." The disconsolate apostles, charmed with the conversation of Jesus, although for the time not recognised by them, "constrained him to abide with them." O put forth such desires after Jesus this day; and open the door of your hearts that the King of Glory may come in!

5. It is a sin-killing sight. The spectacle of a crucified Saviour is one of the surest and most effectual ways of mortifying and destroying

sin. Hard must that heart be that can look at the bleeding Redeemer, and continue to love sin. "They shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn." Look this day to Jesus as slain for you, and sin may receive its death-blow. Visit daily the cross of Calvary, and your habitual language will be, "How shall I, who am dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Shall I ever be so ungrateful and base as to love and practise that which wounded and pierced the blessed Jesus, and brought him to the dust of death?

6. It is a soul-enriching sight. When Christ manifests himself, he leaves a blessing behind him. When he visited the disciples after his resurrection, "he breathed on them and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost." When Stephen saw Jesus at his martyrdom, he was endowed with the very same spirit that animated the bosom of his divine Master in his last struggle; for, like him, he prayed for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." When Jesus revealed himself to Paul, he gave him a full and comprehensive view of the whole plan of redemption. And all who beheld the glory of Christ, as of the only begotten of the Father, "received out of his fulness" their due portion of grace. So does every believing communicant. He receives his share of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the promise of grace to help in every time of need. He is now rich toward God; for he is in possession of the pearl of great price.

Finally, the view of Christ of which we speak will excite a desire to be with him for ever in heaven. Paul had enjoyed much of the presence of Christ on earth, and he had a desire to depart and to be with him in glory. If the imperfect view which faith gives us of Christ now is so transcendantly sweet and ravishing, what must the unclouded vision be! O, how enrapturing to behold without a veil the glory of that Redeemer who fills all heaven with the splendour of his light! "The Lord God, and *the Lamb*, is the light" of that better country. For the present we must be content to see through a glass darkly; but the time is coming when every true Christian shall be fully satisfied with the beatific vision. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

IMPROVEMENT.—1. The aim which you now profess to cherish is a noble one. To see Jesus, and to see him as your own Saviour, is the very highest attainment after which you can now aspire.

2. It is an appropriate aim on such a day as this. You are to seek after a nearer view of Christ crucified this day than on ordinary Sab-

baths. If you "discern not the Lord's body" this day, you miss your aim in coming to his table. Obtain a soul-refreshing view of Christ, and the table of communion will be to you as the gate of heaven.

3. This must be your constant aim. You are not to expect to see Jesus this day, if you mean to turn away your eyes from him when the Communion solemnity is over. "Looking unto Jesus" is the very attitude of the Zion traveller. Keep your eye steadily fixed on Jesus, and he will guide your feet in the way of peace, making all things work together for your good, until at last he shall come and take you to himself, "and so shall you ever be with the Lord."

Finally, I would say to the downcast and desponding, this sight of Christ is attainable. It depends not on human might or wisdom, but on the will of Christ, and on the power of God's Spirit; and the Spirit can open the darkest understanding, and reveal Christ to the most unworthy. But sit not still in sloth. Perhaps at this moment Jesus is passing by, and this is the opportunity of him who is spiritually blind. Hear you not these encouraging words, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." Cast away every entanglement, and turn towards Jesus, and the next words may be, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." And your duty will then be to follow Christ, who has sent forth his spirit to heal you.

Are there any here who have no desire to see Jesus? O foolish people and unwise, what shall I say to you? Perhaps nothing that I might say to you would be of any avail; but what I may say to God for you may be the means of your conversion. May the Lord touch your hard hearts by the power of his efficacious grace! May the enlightening Spirit open your blind eyes to see the beauty of that Saviour who is still, in your estimation, without form or comeliness! While others are looking on the face of Jesus and rejoicing, may you be prevailed upon to follow their example! And in making the attempt may your eyes be opened, and may it be given unto you, in the behalf of Christ, to believe in his name! And may all who have come here this day in a Christless state leave this house with Christ formed in them, the hope of glory.

SERMON LXXVIII.

ON THE DUTY OF EARNEST AND INSTANT ATTENTION TO THE CONCERNS OF
ETERNITY.

BY THE REV. JOHN THOMSON, PAISLEY,
(LATE OF YESTER.)

"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep."—Rom. xlii. 11.

Once, in a large and crowded city, there was heard, at the dead hour of midnight, the startling cry that the city was in flames. The bells tolled the alarm; the watchmen ran from house to house to arouse the slumbering inmates; and others attempted, but without effect, to arrest the progress of the wasting conflagration. The affrighted citizens started from their beds, and rushed forth from their burning dwellings, leaving behind them all their costly treasures, and anxious only to save their lives. The sky above was lighted up with a lurid glare; the houses were falling in rapid succession; the dense clouds of smoke were driven violently on the wings of the wind; the devouring fire advanced in its destructive course, and every heart trembled with anxiety and terror. There was one house in the city which attracted every eye, and rivetted the attention of the crowds who filled the streets. In that house there was one individual who had not been awaked out of sleep, and instantly a ladder was raised to his window, and a generous friend, at the risk of his life, ascended to awake and save the sleeper. He saw him slumbering in his bed, and surrounded by the flames. He urged him to flee for his life, and cried to him, "It is high time to awake out of sleep." But the sleeper heeded him not—he looked wildly around, and bade him begone, and laid himself down to sleep on his burning pillow. His generous friend was compelled to leave him to his fate, and, soon after, he perished in the flames—the victim of his own obstinacy, and the destroyer of his own life.

That man, however, was a *maniac*, in whose soul the lamp of reason had been extinguished; and we cease to wonder at his obstinacy. But can we cease to wonder at those who, though they are in danger of hell-fire, sleep on in hopeless insensibility and spiritual death—regardless

alike of the terrors and mercies of the Lord ; who, though they are living without God, say to their souls, " Peace, peace, when God saith there is no peace," and who never awake from the slumber of a false security till they lift up their eyes in the torments of that fire which never shall be quenched ? " Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ? " Surely if it be true that our sins have exposed us to the fierce wrath of God, to the gnawings of the undying worm, and to the torments of the unquenchable fire, it is high time for all of us to awake and call upon God. And, when we know that there is a way of escape—when we hear the watchmen on the towers of Zion urging us to flee for refuge to Christ, then, instead of folding our hands, like the maniac, and lying down in the sleep of spiritual death, we ought instantly and earnestly to obey the call which is now addressed to us, " Now it is high time to awake out of sleep," and to flee from the burning city of the plain to the hill Zion, where the flames cannot overtake us, and where our souls shall be safe for ever, in the secret place of the Most High, and under the protecting shadow of the Almighty.

In farther directing your attention to these words, I purpose, with the Divine aid and blessing, to consider,

I. The state of those here described—they are said to be *asleep*.

II. The duty incumbent upon them—they are commanded " to *awake out of sleep*."

III. The reasons why this duty should be done immediately—" *Now it is high time to awake out of sleep*."

I. We are to consider *the state of those here described*. They are said to be *asleep*. This expression is evidently metaphorical, and describes here, not the state of the body, but the state of the mind—the spiritual condition of the soul.

There are two ideas which the word " sleep " instantly suggest, viz. *darkness and insensibility*.

1. *Darkness*.—A man who is asleep is surrounded with thick darkness : the light of the sun may be shining through his window and around his bed, but his eyes are closed, and he perceives it not. And so the man who is morally asleep, that is, unconverted, is also in a state of moral darkness—ignorant of God—ignorant of his own real character—ignorant of the things belonging to his everlasting peace. " His understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." Though light has come into the world—though the day-spring from on high has visited us—though the sun of righteousness has arisen upon us

with healing in his beams, yet the man who is morally asleep perceives not that bright, and blessed, and holy light. His eyes are closed in spiritual slumber, and his whole body is covered with the thick shades of spiritual darkness and death. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

2. But the world "sleep" suggests the idea not only of *darkness*, but also of *insensibility*. A man who is asleep is *insensible* to all that is going on around him. He hears not the sound of the rolling thunder, portending a coming storm. He feels not the heaving of the earthquake, which will soon reduce his dwelling to a heap of ruins. His house may be in flames; or an assassin may stand by his bedside ready to inflict the fatal blow; but he is utterly unconscious of danger. He sleeps on calm and secure, dreaming perchance of crowns and sceptres which he shall never gain. He feels no apprehension. He is insensible to fear. So the man who is morally asleep is utterly *insensible* to the things of God and to the realities of a coming eternity; and insensible to the danger to which his sins expose him as a child of wrath and an heir of perdition. This night his soul might be required of him. In a moment he may be driven away unprepared to his last account; and yet he lives as securely as if he were never to encounter the King of Terrors, and never to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Such, brethren, is the state of every unconverted man. He may be wide awake, indeed, as to the things of time; but he is profoundly asleep as to the great concerns of eternity. He is not insensible to those things that are seen and temporal, for these constitute his chief delight, and form the chief objects of his intense desire and feverish pursuit; but he is utterly *insensible* and dead to those things which are unseen and eternal. He walks by sight and not by faith, and lives as if he had no soul to be saved, no hell to shun, no heaven to gain.

My brethren, do *you* really believe that your present existence on earth is uncertain and short, and will soon be terminated? Do you believe that the hour is coming when the quick and the dead shall stand before the bar of God, and that the decisions of the great day will either introduce you into the realms of celestial light, or consign you to the regions of everlasting darkness and despair? Do you believe that on your reception or rejection of the Saviour, in this present life, depends your eternal destiny—that your salvation, if not gained now, will be lost for ever, and that your souls, if not cleansed from sin in this world by the blood of Christ, shall eternally perish? If you *do* believe these things, then why do you think so little about them? Why are you so blind and so insensible to their vast importance? Why is it

that your minds are so deeply engrossed by the fleeting pleasures and pursuits of a world which must soon pass away, and so deeply insensible to the powers of the world to come? Why do you so uniformly prefer the treasures of earth to the treasures of heaven—the comfort of the body to the salvation of the soul—the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, to those enduring pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore? How can all this *blindness* and *insensibility* to things unseen be accounted for, except by supposing that the spirit of deep slumber has been poured upon you—that your eyes are closed and your heart dead to the things of God? Surely then it is “now high time to awake out of sleep.”

But perhaps there are some here who once were awakened from their slumber, and who therefore imagine that the admonition of our text is not applicable to them. They can perhaps recollect a time when they felt, in some measure, the importance of religion and the worth of the soul, and the duty of attending to the “one thing needful.” Impressed with a conviction of their guilt and danger, they earnestly cried, “What must I do to be saved? God be merciful to me a sinner!” They started, as under the influence of a galvanic shock, from the deep slumber of spiritual death, and seemed to awake for a time to newness of life. But since that time they have fallen away, and relapsed into their former insensibility and indifference. Like the foolish virgins, their oil has been exhausted, and their lamps have gone out. Their religious convictions have been effaced—their serious impressions have vanished—their solemn vows have been broken, and their goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew, which soon goeth away. The world, with its fascinating pleasures, has again taken hold of their hearts, and now they feel little or no anxiety about the things belonging to their peace. A death-like stupor has settled upon their souls, and now they can listen unmoved to the most solemn warnings, to the most impressive appeals, to the most tender and touching entreaties of a gracious God. Does the character of any one of *you* answer to this description? If it does, Oh! be warned in time, and listen to the call of God, “Now it is high time for *you* to awake out of sleep.” Once indeed, Oh! backslider, you seemed to be not far from the kingdom of God, but you allowed the favourable opportunity to pass away unheeded and unimproved, and therefore the spirit of God has been ceasing to strive with you. Resist no longer, then, his gracious influences—grieve not the holy Spirit of God, lest you quench the Spirit, and your conscience become seared and your heart dead—lest it be impossible to renew you to repentance, and lest God pronounce this fearful doom, “Make the heart of this people hard, and make their ears heavy, and

shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them." Yes, my brethren, the backslider is exposed to peculiar and pressing danger; and what renders his case so fearful is, that he is insensible to his danger. He is *asleep*—the world and Satan have administered to him their powerful opiates, and lulled him into a false and fatal security, a deep and deathlike slumber, from which he may never be aroused till he hears the sentence of the judge, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Oh! then, mistake not transient convictions for true conversions—mistake not occasional impressions for saving faith—mistake not momentary goodness for vital godliness. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light and life. A moment's delay may be fatal. Now is the accepted time, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep."

II. Let us now consider *the duty incumbent on those who are asleep in sin*. They are commanded to "*awake out of sleep*."

When a person has travelled a long journey over snow in a dark and stormy night, he feels an almost irresistible desire to lie down and sleep on the snow. And if he were to give way to this benumbing influence, then from that sleep he would never again awake in this world; and the snow would be his winding sheet and his grave. His duty in these circumstances is to resist, with all his remaining strength, this benumbing influence, and to struggle on in his toilsome journey, till he reaches a place of safety. And in like manner it is the duty of those who are blind and insensible to the things of God, to resist with vigour the benumbing influence of sin and Satan and the world. If they give way to it, the certain consequence must be eternal death—a sleep perilous and profound—a sleep which will never be broken until the thunders of judgment peal upon their astonished ears. Ye then who once were partially awakened, but who are now less concerned and less alive to your eternal interests, beware of the benumbing influence of things seen and temporal; as Jesus said to the sleeping disciples in the garden, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation," for it is *high time* that you should awake from your lethargy, and earnestly apply your minds to work out your own salvation and prepare for a coming eternity.

But what shall we say to those who have never been awakened to any real concern, any deep anxiety, about the safety of their souls; and who have never yet sought in earnest to know the things belonging to their peace. Alas! dear brethren, your state of darkness and insensibility is fraught with fearful peril, though you neither know nor feel it. The maniac who slept on in a house on fire—the insane traveller who

sleeps soundly on the brink of a precipice—the besotted sailor who sleeps on the bosom of the raging sea when each succeeding wave threatens to bury him in the deep—all these manifest greater wisdom than *you*. And yet your state is not hopeless. Christ is knocking at the door of your hearts and seeking admission. He has been knocking at many hearts for twenty, nay sixty years, and he is knocking still with the hammer of his Word and the power of his Spirit. These are his own gracious words, “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Say to him then, “Come in thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?”

But perhaps some may plead that they cannot arouse themselves from the sleep of spiritual death, and therefore that it is vain to tell them that it is their duty “to awake out of sleep” and flee to Christ for refuge. This plea is often urged dishonestly, as an excuse for continuing in sin, by those who have no true or sincere desire to obtain the great salvation. When urged honestly, under a conviction of felt weakness and helplessness, it should lead you to call upon the Lord in prayer, who has promised that if you ask, you shall receive, if you seek, you shall find, if you knock, it shall be opened unto you. Has not God provided ample means for arousing the slumberers, and shaking off the sleep of spiritual death? Has he not warned you by the visitations of his Providence? Has he not besought you by the still small voice of Gospel mercy? Has he not striven with you by his Holy Spirit? And all this to persuade you to repent and believe in Christ, and to win you to his love and service! What then could have been done more to arouse you, consistently with your free agency, than God has already done? Every affliction, every sermon, every conviction of conscience, every Gospel call, every suggestion of the Spirit, has said to you, as the shipmaster said to Jonah, “What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God;” seest thou not the impending danger? Why wilt thou sleep on amid the storm of the Almighty’s wrath? Call upon thy God and he will answer and save thee. The prophet Ezekiel was commissioned to go forth with the word of the Lord, to a valley full of dry bones; and the Lord said to him, “Prophesy upon these dry bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, *hear the word of the Lord.*” This might seem an unprofitable task, a mere waste of time; but the prophet tells us that while he “prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above.” Still, it is added, “there was no breath in them.” There was the outward appearance of life—the form of religion—but the *vital principle* was still

wanting. But this was soon supplied, and how? "Then said the Lord to Ezekiel, prophesy unto the winds, prophesy, son of man, and say to the winds, thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

Thus it is, brethren; that the sleep of spiritual death is broken, and the breath of spiritual life imparted to the soul. It is through the *prophesying* of God's servants, through the *preaching of his Word*, which becomes a living word by the accompanying power of his life-giving Spirit. Give your attention, then, to the Word of God—use diligently the appointed means of grace, and seek also the teaching and blessing of the divine Spirit to carry home the truth to your conscience and heart; and thus, while the word is preached to you, the dry bones will live, and arise, and walk in newness of life. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He is the light of the world; and, by the power of his enlightening and quickening spirit, he will deliver you both from the darkness of your minds, and from the insensibility of your hearts; so that you shall walk in the light, and become alive to God, as those that are alive from the dead,

III. Let us now, lastly, consider the *reasons why this duty should be done immediately*. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep."

And, 1. *Enough of our time has already been expended unprofitably*.—Our time is a precious talent which God has entrusted to us, that we may diligently improve it; and for the use of every moment of which we must give an account to him. But, ah! my brethren, how little of our past time has been well spent! how much of it has been idly and unprofitably wasted on the pursuit of trifles! and how many days and years have we spent without thinking of God, or bestowing a serious thought on our eternal interests! Surely, then, "it is *now* high time to awake out of sleep"—it is high time for all of us—it is high time for the man of hoary hairs, who has spent sixty or seventy years without God and without hope. "Return, return ye backsliding children, saith the Lord, and I will heal you." "I will receive you graciously; I will love you freely." The time past of your life is more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh; therefore redeem the time that is yet to come. Attend more earnestly to your eternal interests, and pass the time of your sojourning here in the fear of God. Seeing that so much of your time has already been unprofitably wasted, surely "*now* it is high time to awake out of sleep."

2. *The longer we delay the more difficult will our awakening become.*

—The sleep of the soul is different in this respect from the sleep of the body. The body is refreshed by its slumbers, and fitted for renewed activity; but, on the contrary, the soul is enfeebled, and enervated, and unfitted for holy activity, by the sleep of spiritual death. Besides, the sleep of the body becomes lighter and more easily broken the longer it continues; but the sleep of the soul becomes deeper and heavier, and less easily broken the longer it continues. The sleep of the body passes off in the morning; but the sleep of the soul is always becoming more and more profound. When we have been long accustomed to hear the terrors of the law, or the entreaties of the gospel, then, if we are not converted by them, we must be hardened by them. The sounds which once startled us will at length fall powerless upon our ears. The word of God, instead of being a hammer to break the rock in pieces, will become an opiate to lull our souls into a deeper slumber, and a more profound indifference to the things of God. Yes, the longer you delay, the more difficult will your awakening become. Your conscience will become seared as with a hot iron—your heart will become hard as the nether millstone; the light which was in you will become darkness—the truth of God will prove the savour of death unto death—the Spirit of God will cease to strive; and thus every moment's delay increases the difficulties in the way of your conversion, and renders you more callous and more insensible to your eternal interests. Surely, therefore, *“now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”*

3. We know not *how soon time may end, and eternity begin.*—“Brethren, the time is short,” and no less uncertain than short. We know not what a day may bring forth. Do you boast of to-morrow? To-morrow's sun may dawn upon your lifeless bodies, and shine upon your funeral bed. Beware of acting like the rich fool, who promised to himself “many years,” at the very time when God was saying to him, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” Surely, therefore, *now* is the accepted time; and “now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”

SERMON LXXIX.

ON DRAWING NEAR TO GOD.

BY THE REV. GEORGE CUPPLES. DOUNE.

“It is good for me to draw near to God.”—PSALM lxxiii. 28.

THIS is a statement made under the direction of the Holy Ghost, and is to be regarded as his testimony. But this testimony of the Spirit is presented to us as the deliberate judgment, and in connection with the felt experience of an individual saint, who, moved and guided by the Divine witness, puts on record the result of his own personal experience, as embodying an important truth of general application, for the instruction and edification of all into whose hands the record may come. May the Holy Ghost direct and quicken us while we meditate on the subject here presented to us, and cause the truth to come into our hearts with demonstration of his saving power!

What is it to draw near to God? How may we draw near to God? In what respect is it good for us to draw near to God? Some answer to each of these inquiries will be necessary to the edifying illustration of the statement of the text.

I. First, then, what is it to draw near to God?

1. It is the first instinctive act of spiritual life, whereby the new-born creature stretches forth his hands to feel after his parent, that he may come in contact with the source whence he is to derive nourishment and joy—it is that movement of the soul, whereby, under a deep and painful conviction of moral wretchedness, and of distance and alienation from God, enmity against his Spirit, and opposition to His will, as the causes of this unhappy condition, it sets itself to retrace the steps by which it has wandered from his presence, applies itself to him, as the full and all-sufficient source of its happiness, and begins to participate in that love which is henceforth to constitute its life and strength and glory. It is evident that this first act and primary movement of the soul, in the commencement of its spiritual life, was immediately present to the mind of Asaph, when he expressed himself in the words of the

text, for he directly contrasts the state of being near to God, with that of being far from him, and the act of drawing near to him with that of departing from him, apostatizing from his service, and renouncing allegiance to his government. "They that are far from thee shall perish. Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God." This first act of the soul, in drawing near to God, and the happy change of state consequent upon it, are presented to our minds, by the Apostles of the Lord, in such language as the following, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. ii. 25.) "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, ye who sometimes were far off have been made nigh. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Eph. ii. 12, 13, 19.) And again, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Tit. iii. 3-7.) And we have a more beautiful and touching illustration of the same movement, and its happy consequences, in the words of our Lord himself, in the well-known parable of the prodigal son. A forward and inexperienced youth is represented to us, renouncing his duty to his father, and the protection, happiness, and purity of his home; squandering his substance upon ruinous and polluting pleasures; reduced to absolute want and pinching poverty; yet still continuing under the same deplorable infatuation of mind, forgetful of his father's house, regardless of his true interests, and cleaving to the very husks and dregs of his low, empty, and miserable enjoyments; till, about to die, unpitied and unrelieved, in a land of strangers, where no man gives unto him, his eyes are at length opened, and he comes to himself. We then hear him sighing forth these melancholy expressions of contrition for his folly and ingratitude, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father; and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." We next behold him

setting out on his journey, and returning to his father ; and we behold his father, while he is yet a great way off, espying him, and running, and falling upon his neck, and kissing him. We see the joy of the father's heart, at the recovery of his prodigal child, depicted in glowing colours in his countenance ; and we hear him commanding his servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet ; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat and drink, and be merry ; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found." You, my dear brethren, have every one of you, like the poor prodigal, cast off your allegiance to your heavenly Father. You have been guilty of two great evils—having forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out unto yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water. Have you, like him, seen and felt that it is indeed an evil and a bitter thing that you have departed from the Lord your God, and that his fear has not been in you ? Have your eyes been opened to the real misery and sinfulness of your state ? Have your minds been delivered from the gross and fatal delusions of the evil one ? Have you been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to serve the living God ? Have you at length applied yourselves to Him as the only, the supreme, and, alas ! the too-long neglected source of your life and happiness ? Have you taken unto you words, and said unto Him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously ? Other lords have had dominion over our hearts ; but henceforth will we make mention only of thy name ?" If this be so, brethren, it is well with you. You have been recovered out of the snare of the devil. You are returned to the house, protected by the care, watched over by the eye, and guided by the hand, of your Father, and dwelling within the precincts of his love ; and you shall be prepared for engaging in other acts, and performing other services, by which you shall draw near to God. But, if it be otherwise with you—if you be still far from Him—Oh, remember, that not only never can you approach him in any act of worship, or truly perform any acceptable service, until you have first drawn near to him by repentance and conversion ; but if you continue in your present state of distance and alienation from him, you must finally, perhaps soon, it may be this very night, immediately perish. In this case, you are still of the unhappy number of those who go a whoring from him, following after idols, serving another master. And if you return not, he will whet his glittering sword, and his right hand will lay hold on vengeance. He will launch against your souls the thunder of his wrath, and destroy you for ever.

2. The soul which, having been formerly far off, is thus brought nigh by means of that first and most important step whereby it hath passed

from death to life, and is now in a state of reconciliation to God, and interested in His favour, habitually strives to draw still nearer to Him by frequently repeated acts of holy contemplation, faith, and love. God, my brethren, is a spiritual, an infinite, an omnipresent being. He fills all space, and pervades universal nature. He is above, beneath, within, and around us. We cannot be where God is not. Neither can we go anywhere from his presence, or flee from his Spirit. But, although he is not far from every one of us, it is not given to man to behold with the eye of flesh the presence of his God. "We go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive him. On the left hand where he worketh, but we cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that we cannot see him." He dwelleth in light inaccessible and glorious, which no man hath seen, or can see. Every act of approach to God, therefore, must be a spiritual act; and can only be performed by a lively exercise of all the faculties of the understanding, lighted up by the pure beams of Divine truth emanating from on high—in meditating upon his glorious attributes and character as they are manifested in the works of his creating hand—in the course of his providence—in the history of his dispensations—and especially in the mystery of redemption; by putting forth all the active powers of the soul in receiving the testimony he hath given us concerning his Son, taking him to be our covenant God in Christ, and resting with an entire and cordial acquiescence in his own plan for our salvation; and by stirring up all the affections of the renewed man to regard him with supreme delight—with fervent love and gratitude—with hearty trust, affiance, and resignation—and with ardent desires after conformity to his character and obedience to his will. The believer, therefore, since he cannot behold him with the eye of flesh, considers it his highest privilege, and the noblest exercise of his faculties, to endeavour to realize his presence with the eye of faith. He meditates on him with intense earnestness, and with a fixed and vigorous application of his whole heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. Thus he follows hard after him, if by any means he may find him, and come even to his seat. And, although he may for a season be disappointed, and kept in the attitude of one that waiteth for his God, he will assuredly at length be found of him; for he never said to any of his people, Seek ye my face in vain. Are you thus devout and earnest, brethren, in stirring up your souls to distinct and express endeavours to get near unto your God, in these holy acts of faith and contemplation? Do you frequently engage in such exercises? Do you betake yourselves to them with eager expectation and delight, as often as you have an opportunity of retiring from the active bustle and engagements of the world, to enter into the chambers of

your own hearts? Do you set yourselves to meet with God while you sit in your houses, and while you walk by the way; in your lying down, and in your rising up? If thus you follow on to know the Lord—if, even when he appears to tarry, you still wait for him—if, more than they that watch for the morning, you watch for him, he will at length appear to your longing eyes, and manifest himself to your souls in all his endearing characters. His going forth is prepared like the morning; and he will come into you as the rain, even as the former and the latter rain upon the earth. You will soon have reason to say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

3. But the soul, which is thus enabled to draw near to God, and to realize a sense of his presence, by such acts of contemplation, faith, and love, will seek to be admitted to a still more intimate nearness of access to him in the devotional exercises of praise and prayer, in which all the powers of the mind and heart are engaged with no less vigour and intensity, and which are more directly acts of worship. The believer who enjoys the privilege of entering the presence of the King of kings, beholding the beauty of the Lord, and dwelling in the light of his countenance, will not rest satisfied with silently contemplating his glory, however exalted and delightful the privilege may be; but, as he has received a gracious invitation, so will he ardently desire more directly to hold communion, and to maintain a holy intercourse with him, in whom his thoughts find all repose. These exercises of prayer and adoration, whether they be performed in private or in public—whether they be presented in the form of short ejaculatory sentences of petition, confession, and thanksgiving, or be more extended and enlarged, as in the stated worship of the closet, the family, and the sanctuary—whether they be pronounced in distinct and audible expressions, as in the loud acclamation of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, and as when the master of a household or the minister of Christ calls upon the Father of lights in language which is heard, assented to, and joined in by the family or the congregation, or be embodied in no distinct utterance of words but that which is heard within the soul of the worshipper and by the ear of God—in all these various cases, and whatever may be the external form which these exercises may assume, they still bear the character of a direct address to the hearer and answerer of prayer, and if they be performed in spirit and in truth, they constitute a high and peculiar intercourse with him whose glory centres in heaven and fills the universe; the worshipper stands for a season within the veil of the upper sanctuary, and enjoys a most affecting nearness to the throne and the presence of the Eternal. Now, my dear hearers, let me ask you, and let me entreat

you to give the answer to your own consciences, with that deep seriousness of mind and solemnity of feeling which befit the momentous importance of the subject—is it thus that you draw near to God? Or have you hitherto been resting satisfied with a mere form of approach to him? God is a Spirit, and every act of approach to him you see, is an act of the inner man, of the mind, the heart, the affections. Here outward forms can be of no avail in relation to God. And they can be of no importance at all, excepting in so far as our present infirmities render them in some measure necessary and useful for fixing our own attention, and for conveying the knowledge of our sentiments and feelings to our brethren, that they may sympathize and unite with us in the social exercises of devotion. And the mere bodily exercise of bowing the head, lifting up the hands, bending the knee, assuming a solemnity of countenance, and uttering certain words with the mouth, can be of no more avail in the matter of drawing near to God while the heart is far from him, than the frame and members of the body can avail to purposes of life, activity, and enjoyment, when the blood no longer circulates, the lungs have ceased to play, and the animating soul hath fled. If you have paid any serious attention to what has been said on this part of the subject, you may be enabled to form some definite notion of what it is to draw near to God, and to enter into the meaning of such expressions as these, “worshipping God in the Spirit, and having no confidence in the flesh.” (Phil. iii. 3.)

II. In the second place, how may we draw near to God? It was a mark of most becoming humility on the part of Abraham, who bears in Scripture the high and honourable title of *the friend of God*, when communing with him he thus expressed himself, “Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.” (Gen. xviii. 27.) There is indeed a vast and immeasurable distance between the infinite majesty of the eternal God, and the insignificance and vanity of man, his creature, whose habitation is in the dust—who is crushed before the moth—whose life is as a vapour, which appeareth for a very little while, and then vanisheth away. Yet immense as this distance certainly is, and impassible as it may appear, it is not the only or the chief obstacle that is interposed to separate man from his Creator; and he who formed our first parents after his own image knew how, without parting with a single attribute of his character, or compromising one of his rightful claims, he could walk with the workmanship of his hands in Paradise, and admit them to a near and most delightful fellowship. But this holy intercourse was interrupted, and this high privilege was lost, by the entrance of sin, interposing between heaven and earth an abyss dark

and profound as hell, which no mere creature could ever pass on his way to God. Man could no longer be admitted into the presence of his Creator, whose holy and righteous attributes forbade the sacrilegious intercourse. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity—with him evil cannot dwell. In his sight the heavens are not clean. And his angels he chargeth with folly. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh up iniquity like water. "I have heard of thee," said Job, when admitted to an affecting view of the Divine majesty and holiness, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job xlii. 5, 6.) And when Isaiah saw in vision the glory of Jehovah in the temple, and heard the seraphim, while they veiled their faces with their wings, crying "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," he thus emphatically expressed the feelings of profound awe and amazement that filled his mind, "Wo is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!" (Isa. vi. 1, 5.) How hath it come to pass, then, that the high and lofty one who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, can now, without offence or prejudice to the truth and holiness of his nature, and without laying down one iota of his sovereign authority, or in the smallest compromising the honour of his law, condescend to dwell with him also that is of an humble and contrite heart? And how hath it come to pass that the enmity of the sinner's heart may now be slain, that he may be prevailed on to lay down the weapons of his rebellion, and made willing to return as a meek and contrite suppliant to his Lord? An answer to both these enquiries is furnished by the following statement of an apostle, "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. ii. 18.)

1. It is through Christ that we have access to the Father. It is in Jesus, his eternal Son, that "He hath opened up a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh—(Heb. x. 20)—by which we are permitted and invited to return and draw near to God. "Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, being put to death in the flesh." (1 Pet. iii. 18.) "He is the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him." (John xiv. 6.) "He is the door; by him if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John x. 9.) He acts as mediator in the access which sinners have to the presence of their holy and justly offended, but merciful and condescending sovereign. And for this sublime office of mediator he is abundantly qualified, by the infinite worth and essential

glory of his eternal godhead, and by the sympathy of his perfect humanity; being Emmanuel, God in our nature, the equal and fellow of the Almighty, yet bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—by his meritorious obedience even unto death, whereby, standing in our stead, he hath done the will and glorified the authority and government of his Father, and magnified his law and made it honourable—and by his atoning sacrifice, whereby he hath satisfied divine justice, expiated our guilt, and purchased the church with his own blood. It is through the blood of Christ, then, that they who were far off have been made nigh, and have entered into reconciliation with God. It is from his sacrifice and mediation that their acts of meditation and faith derive an efficacious power to lift up upon them the light of the divine countenance, and to realize a sense of the presence of God, when he graciously manifests himself to them in another manner than he doth unto the world. And it is in virtue of his all-prevailing intercession that they are permitted to enter into the holiest of all to present their adorations, thanksgivings, and prayers, and that these acts of worship find acceptance, and procure, out of the divine fulness, for them that offer them, answerable returns of grace.

2. It is by the Spirit that we have access to the Father. It is by the omnipotent grace, the life-giving and invigorating power of the Holy Ghost, that we are enabled to return and draw near to God by that new and living way which is opened and consecrated by the blood of Jesus. It is he who quickens us, naturally dead as we are in sin, and makes us alive unto God. It is he who makes a people willing when it is a day of Messiah's power. He first convinces the sinner of the guilt and misery of his condition—sets before him God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses, and persuades him to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him. He inspires into the believer the sentiments and affections which are indispensable to the performance of these high and holy exercises, by which he enters into the presence, and beholds the glory of his God and King. He breathes into his soul the spirit of prayer, and animates him with the desire of spiritual blessings. And he helpeth his infirmities, showing him what to pray for, and how to ask for it, and maketh intercession in him with groanings which cannot be uttered; and thus directs and supports him in all his approaches to the throne of grace, and in all his intercourse with heaven.

In vain do men attempt to draw near to God by any other method than that which has now been unfolded. Every acceptable approach to him must be made through faith in the atoning blood, and all-prevailing name of Jesus, besides which there is no other under heaven given

among men by which we can be saved ; and other foundation can no man lay, but that which is laid, which God himself hath laid in Zion, even Jesus Christ. And every such approach must be made under the teaching, power, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, by whom alone, certifying our adoption into the family of heaven, we can call God, Abba Father. By none but Jesus, the great High Priest over the house of God, can our prayer be set forth as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as an acceptable sacrifice ; for, while God sitting on a mercy seat, and regarding believers in the face of his Anointed, seeth no iniquity in Jacob, and no perverseness in Israel, it is only on a mercy seat and through a mediator that he can be approached by fallen man. The glorious harmony of his attributes will not admit of his bestowing on the sinner uncovenanted favour ; and out of Christ he is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity. By no other agency than that of the divine Spirit can we be brought into, or conducted in, the path of life. Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. As many as are led by the Spirit, they, and they only, are the sons of God. And if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

It will be found at the solemn and decisive hour, when mistakes on this momentous subject can no longer be rectified, but must remain through eternity irretrievable, that all other methods are no better than refuges of lies, which the hail and tempest of the divine indignation shall utterly sweep away for ever. For, to use the language of the prophet, " the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." And while I assure you, who come to Christ as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, that you also, as living stones, shall be built up on him a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to be near to God, and to offer unto him spiritual sacrifices acceptable through Jesus Christ, I would earnestly and affectionately entreat every one who, deceived by the fatal delusions of Satan, is trusting in the vain hope of finding access to God by any other method than that which he himself hath established, to give heed to the following admonition dictated by his own Spirit, " Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks ; walk in the light of your fire, and of the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have at my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." (Isa. 1. 11.)

III. In what respect is it good for us to draw near to God ? This act of the soul, will appear to be truly good and excellent, if we consider several particulars, some of which will require very little illustration.

1. It is good for us to draw near to God, because it is absolutely indis-

pensable to our escape from ruin and misery, and to our attainment of eternal life. To be away from God in a natural sense is to be beyond the boundaries of possible existence, to be nothing. To be away from him in a spiritual sense is perfectly consistent with a real natural existence; but it is to be beyond the sphere of the influence of his life-giving Spirit and joy-dispensing love—to be unreachd by that favour which is life, and that loving-kindness which is better than life. But we are not only related to God as creatures, who are and must be dependant on the felt presence of their Creator for the smallest portion of real happiness, and who beyond it must be miserable; we have fallen by transgression—we have provoked his righteous displeasure—we are suffering under his curse. In the diseases and infirmities of a decaying tabernacle, death hath already begun to triumph over us, and is eagerly preparing to riot in our spoils. The graves are daily yawning around us to swallow up our brethren; and our own will speedily be prepared to enclose us, as prisoners, in their gloomy mansions. The pit of irretrievable destruction is opening to receive us; and we are sinking into hell, to bear through eternity the weight of the just indignation of a holy God. But outcast and desolate as we are, still there is hope. A way is opened by which we may return from the distance and alienation of our revolt; by which we may be brought nigh to God, to dwell in the light of his countenance, with spiritual life restored to us, and the divine image adorning our souls; to live in his favour, to hold communion with him, to glorify and enjoy him for ever. The proclamation hath gone forth, "Save from going down into the pit; for I have found a ransom." The assurance hath been given, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The call hath been addressed, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die!" The pledge hath been vouchsafed, "He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" My dear hearers, do not such kind invitations, such tender notes of Divine pity, bring to your ears glad tidings of great joy? Do they not sound sweet to your souls, like the songs of seraphs, or the music of the spheres? And is it not good for you that you should immediately comply with them by returning to him against whom you have so foully revolted? If you refuse or neglect to draw near to him, now that he is coming near to you with offers of mercy, you will put your own seal to your condemnation, and the blood of your everlasting destruction will be upon your own heads. Already have you ruined your souls by your vile apostacy; and you will slay them afresh, and be once again, and irretrievably, murderers of your happiness, if now you refuse to save them while you may, while that day of grace still lasts, which soon may close for ever,

2. It is good for us to draw near to God, because it is perfectly agreeable to the dictates of truth and the constitution of our nature, and, in the highest degree, fit, reasonable, and becoming. Man is one of those orders of beings, of which there are many, which were made to show forth the glory of the Divine character; but, being endowed with a moral nature, and capable of an intelligent and voluntary obedience, he is intended to do this, not by a blind and unconscious movement like a planet wheeling in its orbit round the sun, but by dutiful acts of adoration and service, as when an angel of light approaches the throne and bends before the majesty of Jehovah. When he withdraws himself from God, he deviates from the great and holy mark to which all his motions ought to tend; he acts in contempt of the relation by which he is bound to his Creator: he introduces confusion among his works, and must unquestionably bring disgrace, and ruin, and destruction upon himself. When unhappily a child of the family of God has thus estranged himself from his Father, and brought upon himself degradation and sorrow, and when his condescending and gracious Father stretches forth his hands, inviting the prodigal wanderer to return, can any thing short of moral insatiation account for his declining to return and be reinstated in duty and in happiness? Can any thing be more truly monstrous, unnatural, and revolting, than such conduct? And is not this the conduct of every one of you who refuses to be reconciled to his Heavenly Father, or who, restraining prayer before God, habitually neglects to glorify him by offering to him thanksgiving and praise? Oh that every such person would now at length reflect that he is acting in opposition to truth and wisdom, doing what in him lies to rob the Creator of the glory due unto his name, to mar the beauty of the divine workmanship, and ruin the happiness of his brethren; and that the consequences to himself must inevitably be unutterable loss, confusion, and wretchedness.

3. It is good for us to draw near to God, because it is a privilege supremely honourable. How generally felt is the desire to behold the person of an earthly monarch! How prevailing the ambition among the great and noble to stand near the throne! How fervently esteemed and how long cherished in the remembrance, any token of peculiar regard from, or even any casual personal intercourse with, the Sovereign of the land! And how justly valued is the privilege of being in the presence of, and holding communion with, the man whose genius, accomplishments, and worth are held in veneration by his fellow-countrymen and endow him indeed with a moral greatness! And shall we not ardently desire to behold in his beauty the King of kings, to dwell near to him whom the hosts of heaven worship, to bask in the light of *His*

countenance, whose smile animates and cheers the universe? Ought we not to covet with fervent longing, and to pursue with intense earnestness, the honour that would accrue to us from being near to *Him* in whose sight man is but a worm; in comparison of whom the most glorious earthly monarch is altogether vanity; whose inspiration gives understanding, and moral excellence, and who is the alone, the supreme, the eternal fountain of honour? If, O sinner, thou wilt repent and return to God through Jesus Christ, thou shalt be brought nigh to Jehovah the king, thou shalt be made an officer in his household, and a noble in his court; yea, thou shalt become a prince in his family, a king and a priest unto our God. And thou, O Christian, who hast already been introduced into his presence by Messiah, the prince of the kings of the earth, and in consequence of his all-prevailing influence art favoured with an intimate nearness of access to him, and art invited frequently to avail thyself of the inestimable privilege, is it possible that thou canst lightly esteem an honour so exalted, or neglect to exercise a privilege so glorious, by frequently coming in company with the sons of God, to present thy homage to him, in whose presence even the loftiest angels bow their heads, cast low their crowns, and veil their faces with their wings? Oh! no. If thou art indeed a Christian, if thou hast been made nigh by the blood of the cross, thou wilt highly prize and diligently cultivate this supremely honourable privilege; by frequent and devout meditation on his attributes, dispensations, and word, by frequently engaging in the devotional exercises of the closet, the family, and the sanctuary, thou wilt demonstrate that thou dost indeed regard it as a good thing for thee to draw near to God.

4. It is good for us to draw near to God, because it is an act in itself highly pleasing and delightful. There is no truth connected with experimental religion better attested than this, upon the authority of those who are best qualified to bear witness, and who alone are entitled to be heard on such a subject. The writings of David, who has left upon record more of his religious experience and devotional feelings than any other of the saints, abound with expressions of the delight with which he enjoyed, and the ardour with which he looked forward to the seasons of his drawing near to God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God." (Psalm xlii.) "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles! Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God!" (Psalm xliii.) "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will

be still praising thee. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." (Psalm lxxxiv.) "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen them in the sanctuary. I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and when I meditate on thee in the night watches." (Psalm lxiii.)

The pleasure which is felt by the believer in communion with God is derived from various sources. One of these is the *sense of the love of God* which it imparts. Until some measure of this is felt by the worshipper, he can derive no real gratification from the exercises and duties of religion. The foundations of that peace of mind which arises to the believer from an assurance of his interest in the Covenant favour and love of God, are laid in the very first act, by which, through the blood of Jesus, and under the teaching and guidance of his Spirit, he approaches his presence; and in proportion as he is conscious of a true faith, and consequently of his being admitted to a real communion, this peace will be felt by him, and will cause the exercises in which he approaches to God to be full of sweetness and comfort. It is true, and it is much to be lamented, that in too many instances this peace is attained only in a very inconsiderable degree, even by those whom in the judgment of charity we are disposed to regard as real Christians. But is this to be wondered at when they do not strive with earnestness to obtain it? If you will be more lively, hearty, and diligent, dear brethren, in seeking his face, you will soon begin to experience some considerable portion of that peace of God which passeth understanding, and you will be enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And you will not only take great delight in approaching him on this account, but it will open up to you new sources of pleasures and satisfaction in his service. One copious source of this pleasure consists in the *discoveries of the glory of the Divine character* made to the believer when he draws near to God. Now that he is enabled to regard the Divine character, not only without aversion and dread, but with complacency, and comfort, and desire, as the foundation of his trust, and the pledge of his security and happiness, it becomes an interesting employment to consider it in the light of eternal truth as revealed in the Divine testimony; to study with care every illustration of it which he can discover in the various departments of nature; and frequently to set himself by express acts of meditation, and in the exercises of praise and prayer, to enter into the presence and to contemplate the beauty of Him whom his soul loves. In such exercises new wonders of power

and majesty, grace and truth, condescension, tenderness, and wisdom will be ever opening to his view; and as he regards these attributes of his heavenly Father as infinitely amiable in themselves, and as all engaged in advancing his felicity, the contemplation cannot but fill him with exquisite delight. Another source of this pleasure consists in *the exercise of those Christian graces and spiritual affections* which the believer puts forth in drawing near to God. No real and genuine exercise of divine principles and affections can take place without inspiring into the mind of him who is the subject of them the most exalted delight and satisfaction; and in every act of approach to God these in great variety are called forth into lively operation. In every such act that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, is the great and leading principle, whether it be directed immediately to God, or to the Lord Jesus Christ, or to any other of those objects which belong to the class of things spiritual and eternal. Love and gratitude, confidence and resignation, with holy desires, cherished and invigorated by the assured prospect of a large and seasonable fulfilment, are the other exercises of the soul which enter into these employments. And I need not stay to prove that these must be copious sources of joy and pleasure.

When you take a combined view of these rich springs of satisfaction which are opened up to the believer in drawing near to God, do you not feel an earnest desire to realise their enjoyment for yourselves? O taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man that trusteth in him! He never said to any of the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain." If you draw near to him, he will be found of you; and the joy and pleasure which you shall experience from his presence will so endear to your hearts every scene where you meet with him—whether it be while you sit in your houses or while you walk by the way, in a place of secret retirement and meditation, or in a house dedicated to public praise and worship—whether it be under the preaching of the Word, or at a Communion Table—that it will be precious in your eyes; and you will be disposed to say of it, this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Lastly, it is good for us to draw near to God, because this, in its consequences, is eminently profitable, and productive of many important and enduring advantages. These may be considered as comprehended under three general classes, corresponding to the three sources of pleasure in drawing near to God, which I have been endeavouring to illustrate,

1st, That peace in believing which is opened up to the servants

of God in coming to him and holding communion with him, is fitted to have a most important practical influence upon their character. A firm and lively persuasion of an interest in the pardoning mercy and love of God, if not absolutely indispensable to, is beyond all question the most animating spring and principle of gospel holiness. It is a believing application to our own hearts of the blood of Christ that purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. ix. 14.) It is the reception of Christ, as the only remedy from spiritual maladies, that causes our souls to prosper and be in health, and quickens us to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of the Father. It is a sense of the love of Christ to our own souls that constrains us thus to judge that if he died for us, then we were dead, and that we, now living through his death, should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again, (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). It is when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost—(Rom. v. 5)—when we can say with a particular application to ourselves, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon me! It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him;” that, having this hope in Christ, we are animated and quickened by his divine power to purify ourselves even as he is pure, (1 John iii. 1–3.) That peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and good hope through grace, which arise from an assurance of being personally interested in all the riches of the eternal covenant, bring the mind under the commanding influence of love, and gratitude, trust, affiance, and resignation, and impart a holy strength and elevation to the whole character. And thus that communion with God which establishes the believer in settled peace and comfort, must have a powerful tendency to cherish and prosper the life of God in his soul, and to advance the work of his sanctification.

2d, The discoveries made to the believer, when he draws near to God, of the glories of the Divine character, must be eminently fitted to produce a similar salutary influence. You know well the beneficial effects produced on character by the society of the excellent and worthy. When the believer is engaged in holding communion with God, he is in the very best of all companies. A holy influence goes forth from the employment to enlighten his mind, to purify his heart, to spiritualize his affections, and to exalt, ennoble, and enlarge every department of his moral nature; and, while he beholds as in a glass the glory of the Lord, it transforms him into the same image from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord. While he meditates on the character, works, and dispensations of God, he is sweetly but irresistibly engaged to admire, approve, and imitate the

holy object of his contemplation ; to strive to be like Him whom he adores and loves—to be holy as He is holy. The infinite compassion of God beaming forth from the Mount of Calvary and from the cross of Christ, exercises a most attractive and winning influence in engaging him to present himself a living sacrifice in a cheerful and devoted obedience ; while the solemn and affecting exhibition which is there given of God's infinite hatred of sin, and concern to maintain and vindicate the authority of his law, presents the most powerful inducements to crucify sin, and follow after holiness. As when Asaph went into the sanctuary he understood the end of the ungodly and the purpose of God in his dealings with them and with his own servants, so when the believer holds communion with God, and meditates upon his attributes, dispensations, and word, light is thrown on the holiness, fidelity, and wisdom of his character, to clear up the mysteries of his providential government, and to explain his otherwise unaccountable dealings towards the men of the world, and towards his own children. And the experience he often has of his forbearance, tenderness, and condescension, notwithstanding his own frowardness, impatience, and ingratitude, is productive of the most beneficial influence in removing his fears, soothing his anxieties, animating his hopes, and consoling him in the season of trouble ; in lifting up his hands when they hang down, in strengthening his feeble knees, and in enabling him, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, to go forward in his way to heaven.

3d, That exercise of the believer's graces and spiritual affections, which takes place in these acts of meditation and worship, has a powerful influence to advance and promote the divine life in his soul. It is in these graces that the spiritual life consists ; by their actings it is maintained ; and by every thing which calls them forth into lively operation it is strengthened, cherished, and increased. It is impossible that faith and love, confidence and resignation, with holy desires and divine hopes, can be frequently and habitually brought into powerful exercise in those acts in which the believer approaches to God, without producing the most excellent and permanent effects in enabling him to sustain with more fortitude and patience the heaviest trials and afflictions—to receive the severest and most painful chastisements with more meekness, cheerfulness, and humility—to look forward with more faith and quietness of spirit under the withdrawalment of the divine countenance, to seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—to engage with more zeal, vigour, and perseverance in the most difficult and arduous duties—and to abound more and more in the work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope to the end ; and thus to become

progressively qualified for entering upon the meditations, engaging in the worship, and performing the services, of that unspeakably more intimate and exalted communion, to which he shall be introduced in heaven.

Thus the advantages to be derived from drawing near to God are numerous, valuable, and everlasting. The ordinances and institutions in which we are now permitted to approach him, are so many fountains of life and grace opened up to us in the wilderness. They are springs of comfort so sweet and refreshing, that he who hath once tasted of them will return with joy to draw water out of these wells of salvation. And if you, my dear brethren, frequently and habitually repair to them to obtain that health, nourishment, and vigour, which are needful to animate you in the prosecution of your pilgrimage, they, through the Spirit in *them* and in *you*, will quicken you to run with patience the race set before you; they will enable you, forgetting the things which are behind, to reach forth unto those that are before, and to press towards the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus; they will cause you to advance from strength to strength, until every one of you appear before the Lord in Zion.

SERMON LXXX.

THE BELIEVERS' TRIUMPH.

BY THE REV. JAMES BRYCE, ABERDEEN.

"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."—
Rev. xv. 3.

THE Book of Revelation contains a series of visions, which represented to the servant of Jesus the state of the church, from the first age to the period of its final establishment upon the earth, and thence to the consummation of all things. The apostle John, in recording these visions, has made use of terms which convey a meaning very different from that which their ordinary acceptation implies, and much confusion and misapprehension have arisen from inattention to the peculiar signification of the prophetic language. For example, at the beginning of this chapter the writer states that he saw another sign in heaven, in addition to the two signs or wonders that he had already seen, "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars;" and "the great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads." Now, all these signs are said to have appeared in heaven, and the question occurs to us, what is here to be understood by the term heaven? In its ordinary acceptation, it means that place where the glory of God is especially displayed; but in many parts of the book of Revelation it is put for the church of God upon the earth. We conceive, that it was within the church upon the earth that these signs appeared, and the one described in the chapter before us represents the plagues that are to be inflicted on all the anti-christian powers, and the filling up of the wrath of God against them. The Apostle saw as it were a sea of glass, mingled with fire, which may be considered as emblematic of the peace and purity, which the church of Christ shall finally attain, and of the baptism of the Holy Ghost by fire. On this sea stood all those who had gained a victory "over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name;" and in this enumeration of particulars may be included every species of idolatrous worship, all that is false in doctrine and unholy in practice. These are the Saints of God, who, in the midst of temp-

tation and persecution, have kept the commandments and faith of Jesus. If perfect success had not attended all their exertions, and if they still felt that there remained the alloy of human weakness and imperfection, yet a victory had been won, for the Apostle saw them with harps in their hands, ready to celebrate the praises of God for the triumphant position to which, by his mercy and love, they had been exalted. The words of the text speak of the nature of the song which they sung; and we remark, that whatever might be the extent of the victory which had been achieved, they have no desire to ascribe it to themselves, they renounce all participation in a deed so glorious, and give the honour to him, whose works in behalf of his people are great and marvellous. They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

I. Our attention must be directed to this important consideration, that though the people of God in this world are in a state of continual warfare with Satan, with the temptations of the world, and with the corruptions of their own hearts, yet even here they may expect to gain a victory over all these enemies, through the might of him who is the great Captain of their salvation. Every one who has read and studied the Word of God, must be convinced that Satan, our great adversary, is constantly striving "to get an advantage of us," and that he has many devices by which he entangles the souls of men, and endeavours to lead them to destruction. While men continue unregenerate and unconverted, they are the subjects of the prince of darkness, and he scruples at no means, and loses no opportunity, of preserving their allegiance to him entire; and hence the jealousy and rage which are displayed by him and his subjects, when the arrows of the King of Zion "are sharp in the hearts of his enemies, whereby the people fall under him." Even after the day of their conversion, the struggle which they must maintain with Satan and his emissaries, is exceedingly severe; and were they left to their own strength and to their own resources, they would be frequently forced to yield; but the King of Zion never forsakes those who have been brought to acknowledge his government. In proof of the victory which the people of God will gain over the devil, we have the victory which Christ obtained over his fiercest assaults and most powerful temptations. This victory was complete, so that when the seventy returned from that mission on which they had been sent, they felt great joy, because the devils were subject to them through the name of Christ; and it was on that occasion he said to them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven;" and in connection with this declaration, the apostle John says, "I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now is come salva-

tion, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Are there not in this audience those who have had such experience of the victory that has been gained over the prince of darkness, as to be enabled to say, in the exercise of a lively faith, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly?"

The world is also one of the enemies of the believer in Jesus, and with it he must also constantly contend. The devices of Satan would have little effect, were it not that the objects around us are so much suited to our feelings and our tastes. There is, perhaps, no precept more difficult to carry into practice, than that which requires us to use this world without abusing it. What one amongst us does not remember with sorrow and deep humiliation, how frequently he has been wanting in self-denial, and how often the blessings of God's providence have been the occasion of sin, either by the improper use of them, or by excessive indulgence? Even the affections of the heart have been made the instruments by which many have been led into sinful compliances, and many have had sad experience of this truth, "the fear of man bringeth a snare." It is also to be lamented that men, for the sake of peace in their own families, or from a desire to please the rich and the powerful, have been tempted to adopt an unscriptural creed, and to attach themselves to an idolatrous worship. Time would fail us were we to attempt a description of the various ramifications of evil which are found to result from conformity to this world. Let us consider the certainty on which the true believer may build his hopes of obtaining a victory over this great enemy. Our Lord himself taught his disciples to be of good cheer, for he had overcome the world; and when the apostle Paul, in his letter to the converts at Rome, is speaking of those things connected with this world which would have the effect of separating them from the love of Christ, he sums up the whole with this remarkable statement, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

There is also the deceitfulness of the heart; that depravity of our nature, which is styled in the Bible, "strong holds." Assuredly were it not for the corruptions of our heart, the devices of Satan, and his temptations and allurements, would have no power over us; but the warfare of the people of God is not so much from without as from within. The citadel is always in the greatest danger, when its defenders prove traitors, and are anxious to open its gates to the besiegers; so the believer has most to apprehend from the devices of Satan and from the allurements of the world, when the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life induce him to become a traitor to himself. All the objects around us, when seen through the medium of this innate corruption, change

their character and assume an appearance altogether illusory. The weary traveller is not more deceived with the phantom of seas and lakes that start up before him in the desert, than the man of the world, who, under the influence of a corrupt imagination, invests with unsullied splendour and never-ending delights all sensual enjoyments. To the same source may we refer the constant tendency of the human mind to the imposing ceremonies of idolatrous worship—to the lifeless forms of external devotion, and to the adoption of those doctrines which men fondly term rational. The desire of the corrupt and unregenerate heart, is to satisfy the conscience at the least possible expense, and to gain heaven without the necessity of travelling by that narrow path, which alone conducts us to its gates. The believer must be informed, that the first thing at which he must aim, is a victory over himself. The corruption of his heart must be subdued—and he must learn to look at every thing, not through the medium of a depraved nature, but of Divine revelation. The conscience must be brought under the authority of the Bible, and the understanding must be placed under its direction. These are, indeed, attainments in Christianity of the highest order, but they will be assuredly the aim of every believer. No doubt a variety of experience will occur to the servants of Jesus—there will be occasional errors and backslidings. They will find sometimes the truth of that saying of the Great Head of the Church, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;" but assuredly the victory will be theirs; for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with their affections and lusts;" and we also know that "our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Believers are thus taught to look forward to the victory over the Devil, the world, and the corruptions of their hearts, and they shall at length stand upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, to celebrate so much of the victory as has been actually achieved.

II. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God. Moses the great law-giver of Israel has left several compositions which show that he is entitled to occupy a high place among the Hebrew poets; but the allusion here is to that song which he and the children of Israel sang on the memorable occasion, when God miraculously delivered the whole congregation out of the hands of the Egyptians. The armies of Pharaoh had pursued the Israelites, either to destroy them with the sword, or to make them slaves. Before them were mountains, which in their circumstances were impassable; on their right hand was the Red Sea; and behind, their implacable foes. Death or slavery seemed to be the alternative; but the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea was at once the

means of deliverance to the Israelites, and of destruction to the Egyptians. This deliverance is the subject of this song, and the power and goodness of God are acknowledged in the overthrow of the enemies of his people. It is easy to imagine the joy of that people, when they saw their enemies sinking like lead in the mighty waters, and themselves free from the danger with which they were threatened. "The Lord was their strength and their song, and he had become their salvation. The effect which was produced by this miracle on the nations, whose territories Israel was to possess, is noticed with great simplicity and force. Sorrow would take hold of Palestina—amazement would be felt by the Dukes of Edom, and trembling would seize on the mighty men of Moab. The result was an increase of faith in those promises which God had made to their fathers, and an assured confidence that he would bring them into the mountain of his inheritance—into the sanctuary that his hands had established. Such is a very brief outline of that song of Moses, which will be found in full in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. Now there is much of this song which the people of God may appropriate to themselves, in celebrating the victory which the Divine power and goodness have enabled them to obtain. If their spiritual enemies have been dashed in pieces, then they delight to acknowledge that the right hand of the Lord had performed this mighty deed. If sin have no longer dominion over them, and if the corruptions of their hearts have been greatly subdued, this victory has been won by the Spirit of the Lord; and therefore the believer will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. Even in this world may the people of God find much in the song of Moses to assist them in their devotions, and to enable them to celebrate the praises of Him who is unwearied in exercising his power and goodness for their benefit, and for the discomfiture of their enemies.

It may also be observed that this song was sung by the whole congregation of Israel; and so the Church of Christ may use it in celebrating the many deliverances which have been wrought in her behalf. This is the ark that has been careering over the waters for nearly six thousand years, and yet God has preserved her uninjured amid all the tempests with which she has been assailed. When Satan after the fall took possession of this world, he no doubt believed that this fair creation would be one point in the universe on which he could establish his throne, and advantageously carry on his warfare against the Most High. Man was ready to lend his aid to the God of this world, and every thing seemed to operate in his favour. But the Church was still able to resist every assault; and the promised deliverer at length appeared, and then began a fierce struggle between the kingdom of darkness and

the kingdom of light. Satan's object was to stir up the powers of this world to extirpate the Church, and to expel from the earth the King of Zion. Everything was held to be lawful which tended to the accomplishment of this object. Falsehood was resorted to, for the sovereign of this kingdom is a liar from the beginning—blood was recklessly shed, for the prince of darkness is not only a liar, but a murderer. Men were often betrayed under the mask of affection and friendship, for the wiles of Satan assume a variety of forms, and it is a characteristic of his kingdom to set the son against the father, and the wife against her husband. No exertion was spared, and no attempt was left untried to overthrow the Church of the living God; and for a time these efforts appeared to be successful. The Church was scattered—the people of God grievously suffered—their blood was poured out like water, and the spirit of the martyr has winged its flight from the fiery pile to the throne of the Eternal. Still, as in the case of the people of Israel at the Red Sea, when the Church was in extremity that was God's opportunity; and if Israel could sing of the triumphs of Jehovah over the armies of Egypt, much more has the Church cause to celebrate the victory which has been gained age after age over all her enemies. We look at the prohibitions of magistrates, and the decrees of princes—we hear of the rage of the heathen and of the vain imaginings of the people—and we cannot forget that he who sits in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Frequently have the persecutions directed against the ministers of Jesus sent them into places in which the sound of the gospel had not been heard; and it was by their preaching during their exile that the Lord gathered his own sons and daughters into the Church in districts far removed from the ordinary ministrations of his servants, so that the wrath of man was made to praise the Lord. Into the pits which have been dug for the children of God, their enemies themselves have fallen, and the schemes of vengeance which they have devised, have brought upon themselves misery and destruction. Truly, the Church as a whole, as well as all its members, may take up the song of Moses and say, "Jehovah has triumphed gloriously, he is our strength and song, and has also become our salvation."

III. They sing the song of the Lamb. In the song of Moses there was celebrated that providential care by which the Church has been preserved in all ages from the many dangers which have threatened her with destruction: but this is the new song, which rises to a loftier strain, and whose notes swell with sublimer praise. The subject of this exalted song is the display of sovereign grace, and the wonders of redeeming love. They who are qualified to sing this song are the ransomed of the

Lord, of whom the prophet Isaiah says, "They shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." It is only they to whom God has revealed by his Spirit what eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor the heart of man hath conceived—even the things which God has prepared for them that love him. The love of God the Father, from eternity, to his own people, is presented to us in language which it is utterly impossible to mistake, and the apostle John sets this part of the divine character before us by a single stroke of his pen—"God is love." This love, which is an essential part of the character of God, was directed to all the holy beings who had derived their existence from the great Creator, and who kept their first estate; and they enjoy it without interruption and without end. But here is a fact which has struck with wonder all the intelligent beings throughout the universe—the love of God has been shewn to those who were not holy, but sinful, who were not his friends, but his enemies. This love was manifested in setting up, from eternity, as mediator his Son, who rejoiced in the habitable parts of this earth, and whose delights were with the sons of men. He showed it in time by not sparing his own Son, but freely giving him up to death for all his people. No one will deny that this is a new display of the perfections of God, and very different from their exhibition in the works of creation and providence. There is here something which the creatures of God had not formerly discovered—mercy to the guilty, pity and compassion to helpless sinners. We have already remarked that the love of God was experienced by those in his government who were holy; and the saints of God had been the silent but approving witnesses of his righteous vengeance, when he expelled the rebellious angels from the realms of light, and glory, and blessedness, and cast them into the regions of everlasting darkness and despair. This exercise of mercy was a new manifestation of the glory of God; it was needed not in heaven, for mercy has only to do with the guilty, so far as the Bible teaches us; it extended not to hell—it was only this part of the creation of God that was to be the theatre on which God was to shew mercy to be consistent with justice—sin punished, yet the sinners saved. The justification of sinners was involved in the work of Christ, who, from the sacrifice of himself, is here stiled the Lamb. He not only gave full obedience to all, which the first covenant required, but he also endured the punishment which was due to the transgressors of the divine law. He opened the prison door, and set the prisoners free. "He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The sufferings and death of Christ are the most wonderful event which has ever oc-

curred in this world's history. It is surrounded with a brightness which no efforts of man have been able to tarnish, and it has been the subject of unchanging admiration to successive generations of believers in all the nations of the earth. The Lord himself declared that when he was to be lifted up from the earth, he would draw all men to him. As this event has descended the stream of time, it has become more and more conspicuous, and we rejoice to believe that its influence and importance will continue to increase, till all men, from the least to the greatest, will experience its benefits. The most glorious actions that men have achieved only occupy a small place in the annals of mankind, their influence has been merely local, and they are only known to those who employ their time in perusing the records of former ages. But the death of Christ is an event in which the world at large has a deep and lasting interest. It attracts equally the attention of the prince and the peasant. Thousands of volumes have been written to recommend it to the attention of mankind. It has been the subject of the fiercest controversies, and of the most subtle disputations; it is the sheet-anchor of the believer's hope; it is the only foundation of his faith, and it is a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the ungodly and profane. The death of Christ sheds a lustre on every other event which is even remotely connected with it; its influence is not merely felt on the earth, it reaches heaven. The angels in glory desire to look into it, and rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance; and it casts a glory and splendour over all the providential arrangements which God has made for the government of this lower world. Whether, then, we view the death of Christ in connection with the history of the past, or in the effects which are produced on the minds of all the members of the Church, or in the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus, when all his enemies shall be put under his feet, we will find grounds for the most delightful anticipations, and our full hearts must seek relief in celebrating the glory of the Father, who has bestowed upon us the unspeakable gift of his only begotten Son, and in singing the song of the Lamb. This song is found in various forms in different parts of the Bible, but the theme is always the same. In the books of Psalms, Isaiah, and Revelation, it occurs prominently under the title of a new song, in which the mercy of God is exhibited in the sacrifice of the Lamb. For example, in Rev. v. 9 we read that the four beasts and the four and twenty elders sang a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." The subject of the ciii.d Psalm is the

mercy of God in the work of redemption, and how frequently do we find the sacred poets expressing their thanks to the Lord, "for his mercy endureth for ever." To believers this is indeed a new song—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain—to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." This is the new song which the redeemed alone have been taught to sing, and, while they pass through this vale of tears, their hearts will be cheered and comforted with the sentiments which it contains, and with the glorious prospects which it presents to the followers of the Lamb.

In applying this subject, we may be permitted to address every individual, and to ask whether you are now waiting and longing for the victory over Satan and the world, and the corruptions of your hearts? Nay, we go farther, and ask you, whether, professing yourselves to be the children of God, a victory to a certain extent has not already been gained? You must, then, have observed the providence of God in bringing you within the reach of the means by which you have been enabled, in some good measure, to overcome, and to see the salvation of our God,—are you not, then, prepared to sing the song which Moses sang, and to give God the glory for all his providential dealings with regard to your condition? Still further, when you contemplate the whole work of Jesus, his holy life, his sufferings and death, by which alone the victory will be completely yours, are you not prepared to sing the song of the Lamb? When the men of the world meet together, they seek enjoyment in singing songs suited to the carnal heart, and yet what delight and enthusiasm do they frequently produce? And will believers in Jesus be found backward in expressing their feelings, and in celebrating, with holy joy and Christian enthusiasm, all that God has done for the salvation of his people in former and latter times? Not only the present condition of the members of the Church, but the events of the past, and the prospects of the future, equally contribute to swell this song of praise; and, therefore, in all your meetings for the purpose of social enjoyment and agreeable relaxation, why should not your conversation be about the wonders of redeeming love, and why should not the songs which you sing together be the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb? When you praise God in your families and in the Christian assemblies, let the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, the salvation which he has wrought, be deeply felt in your hearts, and warmly expressed by your lips. The joys of believers in this world are mingled with many sorrows; comparatively few can say that they have been able to soar above the mists and clouds with which they are surrounded, and that they can look with steady eye and unclouded faith into the bright regions of everlasting day. Other things may employ our thoughts besides the victory that must be obtained

and the work which Christ has accomplished, and the salvation that he has to bestow. If these things chiefly engross the soul—if, in consequence, we are often, very often, singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, then this must be accompanied with corresponding faith, which is the gift of God, and the mists and darkness of this world will gradually disappear, and the sun of righteousness will be seen in all his splendour. Further, these exercises may be considered as the preparation for the heavenly state, for the song, which is new upon the earth, will be always fresh, and always new in heaven. The death of Christ will be the subject of praise to the redeemed throughout eternity. If you have tasted of the pleasures of the world to come, this song, as now described, will form part of your daily devotions, that you may be prepared to join the heavenly choir in celebrating the glory of the Lamb when time shall be no more.

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SERMON LXXXI.

THE OBJECT OF GOD IN MAN'S REDEMPTION.

BY THE REV. JAMES BRODIE, A.M., MONIMAIL.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."—LUKE II. 14.

THE circumstances that attended our Saviour's birth, exhibit a mixture of majesty and humiliation that strikingly correspond to the double character which he sustained. As in his person he combined the nature of God with that of man, as he was at once the Creator and the creature, the highest of all beings and one of the most feeble, the self-existent Jehovah and the infant of days; so his birth, in the eye of man, was mean, while in the sight of God it was full of glory. No earthly palace received the new-born heir of David's throne; but the mansions above confessed him Lord: no human herald sounded his approach; but a chorus of angels proclaimed his coming: men gave no welcome, raised no shout, paid no homage; but the hosts of heaven sang their halleluiah, and adored in Bethlehem's babe the universal king.

The song of praise with which the angelic worshippers saluted the infant Saviour, forms the subject of our present discourse; and it is surely natural for us to enquire into the purport of their hymn. We may also remark, that, even if no extraordinary circumstance had directed our attention towards it, there is so much beauty in its style, and so much importance in the truth it reveals, it may safely be affirmed, that no passage in all the sacred volume better deserves the labour of the critic, or will more richly repay the study of the Christian.

When we direct our attention to the import of the expressions employed, we find two of them that require a little explanation. The word translated "highest" may be considered as referring either to the measure of praise given to God, or to the condition and abode of those by whom it is offered. The clause, therefore, to which it belongs may be regarded either as a general invitation to every creature to ascribe to the Lord the *highest* glory, or as a special call on the angelic hosts, who

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are *highest* in rank among created beings, and dwell in the *highest* heaven, to pay their homage to the God of Redemption.

The latter of these interpretations is more in harmony with the other parts of the verse than the former; it is, at the same time, better suited to the primitive signification of the original Greek, and to the mode of expression elsewhere employed by the sacred writers, and has consequently been generally adopted by our ablest commentators. We may therefore consider the word *highest* as referring to heaven, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, and denoting the abodes of bliss in the presence of God. The last word in the verse, "good-will," does not fully convey the import of the corresponding term in Greek, which should have been rendered *well-pleasedness*, if there had been such a vocable in our language. It expresses that feeling of complacency and delight with which we regard an object of fond affection,—it denotes, for example, the love which God the Father felt toward the Saviour, when the voice from the excellent glory proclaimed, "This is my beloved son in whom I am *well pleased*."

We find somewhat greater difficulty in arranging the different clauses of the verse, than in determining the translation of the words. The style employed is evidently abrupt and elliptical. It is not a simple message plainly told; it is the impassioned expression of feelings too intense for the ordinary length of common discourse. There is in it no explanatory term, and the words that usually connect the parts of a sentence together are almost entirely wanting. We need not wonder, therefore, though diversity of opinion has arisen with respect to its interpretation. Some divide it into three clauses, the *first* referring to the glory ascribed to God in heaven, the *second* to the peace bestowed upon earth, and the *third* to the favour manifested towards men. Others arrange it into two parts, the *first* referring to God, and the *second* to man, while in each of the two there is a subordinate division. Without discussing the critical arguments on either side, it is enough to observe that several considerations lead us to prefer the latter arrangement. If this interpretation be allowed, we may consider the passage as a poetic chorus, arranged according to the rules of Hebrew versification. What these rules were may be easily seen if we examine the book of Psalms. The sacred melodies have evidently been composed for the responsive song of alternate companies. The first verse, or clause of a verse, introduces an idea or sentiment, which the second illustrates or confirms; another statement is then made, either naturally following from the former, or contrasting with it, which a succeeding clause in like manner enlarges and strengthens. If we apply these remarks to the illustration of the passage before us, it may be literally translated and divided as follows:

Glory to God in heaven,—and on earth ; peace towards men,—good-will. Or, in order to shew more clearly the division of the various parts, it might be paraphrased in verse ;

All praise to God in heaven,
 All praise on earth below ;
 For peace to man is given,
 And favours overflow.

We do not find in our text the usual simplicity of the gospel statements,—it points out, in a few words, in strong contrast and striking climax, the great design of redemption. We have not a hymn composed for man ; we listen to the sound of the harp of heaven struck by an angel's hand. We have not the lisping accents of the “babe in Christ,” we hear the voice of the “perfect man.” It is not any dialect of earth that is spoken, it is the language of the saints and the seraphim above.

In following what appears to be the natural division of the subject, we proceed to direct our attention to four particulars ; *first*, The glory that accrues to God in heaven in consequence of Christ's coming into the world ; *second*, The glory ascribed to him on earth ; *third*, The peace given to men ; *fourth*, The good-will shown towards them.

I. We propose, in the *first* place, to consider the glory that accrues to God in heaven in consequence of Christ's coming into the world.—We are apt to imagine, such is the selfish nature of our views, that Christ's coming was intended merely for the benefit of man ; but we find that the Word of God holds forth the advancement of the Father's glory as the chief and ultimate design of all the works of God. Now, what is this glory ? It is the praise ascribed to him by his creatures, and its advancement is the increasing of this praise. Or, looking on praise as the outward expression of an inward feeling, God's glory may be considered as consisting of the fear and the reverence,—the love and the gratitude which his creatures feel towards him. When we speak of bestowing honour, or glory, on a man, we generally understand the raising him to a higher rank, by increasing the advantages which he possesses ; but, in this sense, the word cannot be applied to God. He can never be raised to a higher rank than that which he has always held. He cannot be made more worthy of honour than he has always been. His every attribute has, from eternity, been boundless. His glory, therefore, cannot be increased by any addition to the perfections which he possesses, it can only be advanced by making these perfections more fully known. We are thus enabled to understand the import of the clause now under consideration. The coming of Jesus shows forth

more clearly the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Lord; and thus, though Jehovah cannot become, in reality, more powerful, wise, or good, he appears to be so to the limited capacities of his creatures, and they are led more deeply to love him and more cheerfully to pay him the homage due. The glory of God is advanced in heaven by the advent of Christ, for the work which he has accomplished in man's salvation enables the blessed inhabitants above, the angels and archangels that stand around the throne, more clearly to understand their Maker's perfections, and more cordially to render him everlasting praise.

Nor is this all. It appears, from the manner in which redemption is spoken of in Scripture, that this work is greater than any which God has elsewhere wrought. The love shown to man is more wonderful than that which has been exhibited to any other creature. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us;" and hence it is said, that, "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, is made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God."

The wisdom, power, and goodness of the Lord are exhibited in his creating and preserving the universe, but these perfections are far more clearly displayed in the person and work of the Redeemer. In minerals and in vegetables, we find many wondrous combinations of the various kinds of matter. In animals, we see the dead unfeeling dust united to the living and active spirit. In ourselves, we see an immortal soul joined to a diseased and dying frame, and we are led to exclaim, We are fearfully and wonderfully made! But in Christ we find a combination more wonderful by far. In Him, we see united together the Creator and the creature. In Him, the High and Holy One was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. The Infinite Jehovah assumed a mortal form, and, having been, in all things, tempted like as we are, He died the cursed death of the cross, and bore the Father's wrath in the room of man.

The love and tenderness of the Deity are shown in supplying the wants of all his creatures, in giving to the beast his food, and to the angel his theme of praise; but these perfections are much more wonderfully manifested in giving his Son to die for men—in making the elect his sons and heirs—in looking on them with delight, as a fond parent looks on a darling child—in making them one with Jesus, and in giving them a share in the throne and glories of the great Redeemer.

The justice of the Lord is proved by the punishment of Satan and his associates in hell; but, though that exhibition of Jehovah's vengeance be terrible indeed, it cannot for a moment compare with that which was made in the crucifixion of Christ, when God spared not his own Son, but,

to satisfy the infinity of his justice, poured out the vials of his wrath on the head of his only-begotten and well-beloved. The sufferings of all creation, of man and beast, of angel and devil, through the endless ages of eternity, could not so fully have shown forth the holiness of God and his hatred of sin as did the agony of Immanuel, when, under the forsaking of his Father, he bowed his head and died. Then there was a wound inflicted of which the trace can never be removed. So terrible was it, that the Redeemer appears, even in the "midst of the throne," as a lamb that has been slain. The countenance of the King, in the brightness of his eternal glory, retains the care-worn furrows that were drawn upon it, when he walked on earth as the man of sorrows. The tree of life in the paradise above, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, continues to bear the mark of the lightning-stroke of wrath, that blighted its form when it grew on earth "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."

The character of God, as shewn forth in Christ, may fail of exciting our admiration or love, because we are weak, because sin has hardened our hearts and darkened our minds; but to every intelligent, unfallen creature, it is the object of supreme delight. Into these things "angels desire to look." To them they are the source of their joy, and the theme of their song.

Various passages of Scripture lead us farther to believe that angels do not only rejoice because the character of Jehovah is shewn forth in the Saviour, but because they find immediate advantage in having Jesus for their Lord and King. Christ, as Immanuel, in manhood enshrining the Deity, is the head of creation; and before him, in his character of God and man, angels bow down and adore. It would appear that the distance between the Creator and his creatures, between His boundless might and their limited power, is so immeasurable, that an intermediate step, as it were, was required, in order that they might more nearly approach him; and it is through the Redeemer that they are brought near. Jesus forms the wondrous link that binds creation to its God. Jehovah, clothed with honour and with majesty, covering himself with light as with a garment, is too glorious an object for the powers even of the angel directly to contemplate, or rightly to understand. But in Jesus, who is the fulness of the Godhead bodily, this brilliancy of omnipotence is veiled, and the exceeding splendour of the Deity, which, directly viewed, would overwhelm the highest created intelligence, may be contemplated in Christ with safety and delight. As the rays of the unclouded sun, which, shining full on the sight, give pain instead of pleasure, and dazzle instead of enabling to see, when they are reflected from the varied landscape around, give all that beauty of colouring which delights the eye, and all that

cheerfulness which distinguishes the smiling face of day ; so the dazzling, blinding glory of pure Divinity, on which the sun-eyed seraph dare not look, when reflected from the face of the Lord's anointed, delights the spiritual eye, and gives all its bliss and all its beauty to that heavenly habitation in which there is no sun, but "the Lamb is the light thereof."

Thus, through the Saviour and his work, is glory given to God in the "*highest heaven.*"

II. We, in the *second* place, direct our attention to the glory that is ascribed to God on earth, in consequence of Christ's coming into the world. Having considered the first clause of the verse as referring to the hosts of heaven, we are necessarily led to look on the one now before us as applying to the children of men. Our present enquiry must therefore be, what is the increase of glory which God derives from them, in consequence of the Saviour's coming ?

It is at the first sight obvious, that, whatever improvement, in the outward observance of God's commandments, has resulted from the preaching of the gospel, must be ascribed to the work of the Redeemer ; and even the scoffer, who profanely mocks at the sacred volume, will not venture to deny that there is more morality in a Christian land than in a heathen one, and that we naturally expect to find higher attainments in virtue in a professedly pious man, than in an infidel despiser of ordinances.

We must not, however, limit our view to the change produced in mere external conduct, nor rest contented when we have contrasted the outward character of the heathen with that of the professing Christian. We must direct our enquiry to the change produced on the heart, and contrast the unconverted man, who remains in his original darkness, with the Christian indeed, who walks by faith and not by sight. What, then, is the character of those who remain in their natural unrenewed state ? Scripture tells us, that "they live without God and without hope in the world ;" that "there is none righteous, no not one, there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God ; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one ; their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips ; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ; their feet are swift to shed blood ; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." This account is abundantly confirmed by the records of history and the observations of experience. The dark places

of the earth have ever been, and still are, the abodes of horrid cruelty; the most hateful offences are unblushingly perpetrated, and even the religious rites that are practised are frequently nothing but shameful and unnatural crimes. And what is the change that the gospel effects? It spreads a humanizing influence over the people at large, and changes the whole face of society. Order succeeds to confusion, and morality to crime. But it does more. From among those who are thus sunk in sin, and by nature the children of wrath, the Saviour redeems his Church, and quickeneth those who were dead in trespasses and sins. By his Word and ordinances, he makes known to them the will of God; by his example, he sets them a pattern of perfect obedience; and by his Spirit, he enlightens their darkened mind and renews their corrupt heart. Their conduct becomes more and more conformed to the precepts he has given, so that, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, they shine as lights in the world. Their inward feelings are entirely changed. Instead of regarding God with distrust and alarm, they look on him as their dearest friend, and cast all their burden on his paternal care. Instead of delighting in sin, they delight in the law of the Lord; and while they rejoice in the hope of forgiveness through Christ, this very hope excites them to renewed endeavours after holiness. The unconverted man is restrained from transgression by no higher motives than the dread of judgment, or the desire of reward. The motives of the Christian are gratitude and love. He does not keep the commandments merely from the fear of hell, this would be to render the obedience of a slave—he does not keep them merely from a desire of future bliss, this would be to give the service of a hireling—he is led to observe them by reverence and affection, which are the motives of a son; and the more fully the gospel is known, and the more assuredly it is believed, and the more firmly the Christian relies on Christ as his all in all, the more does he love the Lord who redeems him, and the more does he praise the riches of his grace.

Let us farther remark, that even the unregenerate partake for a season, that is, while the day of mercy lasts, in the purifying influences of the Redeemer's work. The preaching of the gospel, which works an outward reformation on many who remain unchanged in heart, is the same gracious ordinance that transforms those who are truly converted. The restraining influences of God's Holy Spirit, of which all men are partakers, are the consequences of Jesus' coming, as well as that renewing grace which is the peculiar privilege of the Redeemer. The Spirit that strives with the wickedness of the unrenewed man, is the same glorious Being as the Comforter that guides the believer in the ways of righteousness. There are diversities of operations, but all these worketh that

one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will; and the Spirit cometh from the Father through the mediation of the Son. If Jesus had not finished his work, the Holy Ghost would not have been sent; man would have been left to the freedom of his debased affections, every hateful passion would have raged unrestrained in his breast, he would have followed the course of Satan, and rivalling the fiends in hatred of God, would have made the world another hell. This is then the glory that accrues to God on earth, in consequence of the coming of our Lord. Earth, that would have been the abode of all that is vile, has been made the scene of many miracles of grace; Earth, that would have re-echoed nothing but the voice of blasphemy, has often resounded with the notes of praise; and from among the slaves of Satan, God has raised up a holy and peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We may farther observe, that, if we be correct in regarding our text as framed according to the rules of Hebrew poetry, this second clause should contain something more striking and wonderful than the first; and a moment's reflection suffices to show that this is the case. The praise rendered by man is indeed more glorious to God than that which is given by angels. It is easy to lead a friend to honour us, it is easy to increase his affection, and to draw forth from him expressions of regard; but it is an arduous task to draw forth approbation from the unwilling lips of a foe, to subdue his rooted aversion, and change it into love. How glorious must we then consider that manifestation of his grace and power to be, which Jehovah gives us, when he changes his enemies into sons, when he eradicates their inborn hate, implants in its stead gratitude and affection, and teaches those who are once the willing slaves of Satan to delight in the law of the Lord! This was a work which nothing but infinite love could have desired—nothing but infinite wisdom devised—and nothing but boundless power achieved.

Keep it ever in mind, ye servants of the Lord, the work of your deliverance is the chief of all the works of God. There is a more glorious display of the Divine perfections in bringing you out of a state of sin and misery than in bringing day out of night, when the command was given, "Let there be light, and there was light." And if you are the objects of such a work as this, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!

And ye that think man able of himself to do the will of his Maker, and to turn from the evil of his ways, do ye not see that without God ye can do nothing? Would you not find it a vain attempt were you to endeavour to dry up the clouds that they should not rain, or to bind up the wind that it should not blow? Yet the work of man's conversion is

mightier far than these. Trust not in yourselves, but betake you to Christ, and entreat of him to send you sanctifying grace, for all your labour will be fruitless, unless He send the Holy Spirit to work in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

III. In the *third* place, we propose to direct our attention to the peace given to men by the manifestation of the Messiah.

Man, in consequence of Adam's original transgression, comes into the world a child of wrath. He inherits, moreover, a fallen nature, and to his original sin he adds the guilt of all his actual transgressions. Day by day he is offending. Even in the believing child of God, every deed is marred by some admixture of evil, and every thought is polluted; while the actions, and the speech, and the imagination of the heart of the unconverted man are only evil, and that continually. The multitude of our offences exceeds the number of the stars. At the same time, we must recollect that every transgression is a breach of the Divine law, on the upholding of which the peace of the universe depends; every evil deed is an act of rebellion against the eternal king; every sin, even the least, cries out for judgment, and deserves the wrath and curse of God, both in this life and in that which is to come. Who then can calculate the load of guilt that lies on us because of thousand, thousand sins? Who can tell the amount of wrath incurred by a lifetime of disobedience? This guilt, God, as the righteous sovereign of the universe, cannot allow to pass without receiving its due measure of recompense. It would be inconsistent with his attributes of holiness and justice to pardon the violation of his law without receiving a satisfaction. But where is there any one able to offer a satisfaction for the sins of a world? Where is there any one able to endure the punishment incurred by man's transgression? The penalty is so awful that no mere creature could bear it; and therefore, when none could either save his own soul or provide a ransom for his brother, the eternal Son of God took on him our nature—combined the attributes of deity with the properties of humanity—became man that he might be capable of suffering—continued to be God that he might be able to bear an infinite load of woe—and presenting himself as a self-devoted sacrifice, bore our guilt and endured in our stead the wrath of the Father.

By this means the law was satisfied, and though man has sinned it does not exact from him the penalty due. The Father is reconciled unto the world, and for his Son's sake deals with all men, even with the unconverted, in long-suffering and goodness. He leaves them, during the day of trial upon earth, to enjoy the comforts of life—he continues with them the means of grace, and makes to all the offer of pardon; while

to those who accept of his offer and believe on his Son, he gives peace, perfect peace, "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Though their sins may have been as scarlet, yet are they made white as snow ; though their transgressions may have been numerous as the sands on the sea shore, they are all taken away ; though their garments may have been altogether defiled in the mire of sin, yet are they washed and made clean in the blood of the Lamb.

Such is the peace that Jesus bestows upon his people. Such is the glorious footing on which they stand before the judge. By nature they are under the curse and exposed to the wrath of God, but united to Jesus they are justified, and in the sight of the law are free from offence. Their sins are no more remembered against them. When clothed in the robe of their Redeemer's righteousness, they stand before the Lord without spot or stain, and He, in whose eyes the heavens are not clean, and who charged even his angels with folly, sees no sin in his saints, no blemish in his Israel.

IV. We now come, in the last place, to consider the good-will shewn towards men.

As was formerly observed, the word translated "good-will" denotes the feeling with which the object of fond affection is regarded, and is employed to express the love entertained by Jehovah towards his only-begotten Son. It represents a sentiment, therefore, far stronger than that which is indicated by the term peace. In consequence of Jesus suffering in the room of his people, they are justified, and shall be openly acquitted in the day of judgment ; but if the Saviour had merely offered a satisfaction for sins, they would have had no title to expect any favour. God would have ceased to be an enemy ; but he would not have become a friend. Jesus, therefore, not only suffered the penalty of the law in the room of those who believe in his name ; but he fulfilled all its requirements in their stead. Being clothed in human nature, he not only endured the doom which they had incurred ; but he performed every behest that could be demanded from man. He did more, he rendered to the commandment of God a service which no mere creature could ever have undertaken. Accounting it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himself and became obedient even to the death. Entitled, as the eternal Son, to make his own will his only rule, he submitted to the appointment of the Father, and said, in the most trying circumstances, "not my will but thine be done." Sustained by the Deity dwelling within him, he performed a work which none but Immanuel could have accomplished. By that work the law was magnified and made honourable. The purity and extent of the Divine commandments were more

clearly shewn by his submission than they ever could have been by the service of angels or of men. He can claim, therefore, from the Father, as lawgiver, a right to reward proportioned to the merits of his work, and these merits being unlimited, all judgment has been committed into his hand. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." The right which he has thus acquired to a reward, and the inheritance consequently bestowed upon him, Jesus shares with his people, and having taken them into union with himself, he not only frees them from guilt, but procures their admission into favour. He not only frees them from the doom in which they lay, but he makes them to be acknowledged as the sons of God. He not only procures by his substituted suffering their justification, but by his substituted service he secures their adoption. This justification is the foundation of the peace given to men ; and this adoption is the source of the good-will, or favour, with which they are regarded.

In consequence of their sharing in the merits of the Saviour's work, believers are entitled to all the privileges of the sons of God, and more especially to the Spirit of adoption, whereby they can say, Abba, Father. They have a share in his inheritance, and out of the fulness of the Spirit dwelling in him, they all receive "even grace for grace." Their future condition will not be one like the present, but far nobler and better ; it will not be merely equal to that of Adam in paradise, but nobler and better ; nay, in many respects it will surpass even that of angels. Saints are said to be sons and heirs of God ; angels are but ministering spirits sent to minister to those that are heirs of salvation. The glory promised is so great that we cannot conceive its extent ; it is so wonderful that we cannot comprehend its nature. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The faithful in Christ Jesus have a claim to reward to which no other creature can aspire, for their title rests not on the obedience of a mere creature, but on that of Him who was God as well as man. On this account they are called "children of the Most High,"—they are represented as succeeding to his possessions,—they are termed "heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ,"—"All things are theirs, whether things present, or things to come, all are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's,"—they are "flesh of the Saviour's flesh, and bone of his bone,"—they are members of that Church which is "the bride of the Lamb,"—they are members of that body of which "he is the head ;" and, when the husband succeeds to his dignity, the bride, we are assured, will share in his honours ; when the head is encircled with the diadem of the universe, the members of the body will put on the royal

robe. Those who are united to Christ shall be "kings and priests unto God," and "shall reign for ever and ever."

Such is the external glory promised to those who were by nature enemies and aliens to God! But the promise of union to Christ awakens in the believer a deeper interest than this! When the bosom glows with love to the Saviour, heaven is not regarded as the abode of glory, but as the dwelling place of the Lamb; and thrones and crowns are not prized as the insignia of power, but as the pledges of the Redeemer's love. Union, close, unchanging union to Christ, is the sole desire of the enraptured soul. When the mind is engaged in considering the character of Christ, and the attention is turned to such passages as these;—"We shall bear his image,"—"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,"—"We shall be for ever with the Lord;"—the triumphing believer longs to cast the golden crown of heaven at the Redeemer's feet—to join in the obeisance of the elders around the throne; and to ascribe honour, and glory, and blessing, and power to the Lamb, that God may be all in all.

Similar emotions are awakened in the Christian's soul, when he contemplates the work that is assigned to him. He is not called to spend the time given him upon earth, or the eternity promised to him in heaven, in sinful indulgence, or in indolent repose. The blessed and gracious God has allotted him a task as glorious and joyful as his condition can be. The believer is to become the active agent in promoting the glory of his Maker, and the well-being of his fellow creatures. He is to share in the rewards which Jesus hath earned, and at the same time to co-operate in the blissful labour which the Father hath committed to his Son.

This is the destiny of the believer—this is the "good-will" shown to man. He is to be "like God," not only in knowing good and evil, the highest object of Eve's short-sighted ambition, but in possessing "all things," in "partaking of the Divine nature," and in sharing the blessed and glorious privilege of promoting the universal good. Our limits do not admit of any lengthened remarks in concluding this discourse, nor does the subject require them. If the destiny for which man has been created, preserved, and redeemed, be so exalted, let us live worthy of our high vocation, and begin upon earth the work of Heaven. And if God does not regard us because of our might and our merit, but makes use of our weakness, vileness, and sin, in order to shew forth the sovereignty of his grace; if He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, let us ascribe the praise to Him who is the Alpha and Omega of the whole, and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God.

SERMON LXXXII.

JESUS THE ONLY SAVIOUR.

BY THE REV. JAMES BEGG, NEWINGTON, EDINBURGH.

"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."—Acts iv. 12.

THERE are two remarkable circumstances connected with this passage of Scripture. It is remarkable as forming part of a sermon by Peter. Peter, who thrice denied his Master, this very Jesus—who said, with cursing and swearing, "I know not the man"—has now been so completely changed by the downpouring of the Holy Ghost, so inspired with faith and courage, that he is forward to declare that "there is salvation in no other." It is remarkable also, as having been first delivered in the hearing of the judges and murderers of Jesus. "Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest," were present when this sermon was preached; and it must have brought strange tidings to their ears. When Jesus stood before their tribunal, he told them that "hereafter they would see the Son of Man standing on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven;" and when the sacred writer speaks of his second coming, he says, "every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him." Now, it must have been a foretaste of this fearful truth, when his apostles stood in their presence, after the death of their Master, no longer despised fishermen, but bold and eloquent, working miracles, speaking with tongues, and telling these apostate rulers, "Ye, indeed, delivered him up from envy, and desired a murderer to be granted to you; ye crucified the holy one and the just, and ye imagined that all was over. But lo, ye were mere instruments in fulfilling the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God: the grave has not retained him; he has burst its gloomy fetters and risen to the power of an endless life. We are his witnesses; these miracles are wrought by his power, these strange tongues are the gift of his Spirit, 'therefore,

let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ.' From the cross he has passed to the crown, from the grave to the mansions of glory; earth and heaven equally obey the commands of him whom ye 'took and hanged on a tree.' 'Neither is there salvation in any other, nor another name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved.'"

Let us now consider the truth itself, viz., that there is only one way to heaven, and that Jesus is that way. In illustrating this subject, let us *first* remove an objection which naturally arises in the minds of some men when such a truth is announced. *Second*, let us farther explain the truth itself as here stated. *Third*, let us establish and apply it as one of the most momentous truths of Scripture.

I. A difficulty arises in the minds of some men when such a doctrine is announced, as if it savoured of intolerance. They think it becomes them merely to rest satisfied with the general idea that Christianity is true and important, but do not habitually feel that it is the only Divine religion on earth, and that all other superstitions are the delusions of the god of this world. They do not live under the conviction that unless they are savingly united to Christ, they shall be bound together with the tares and cast into the eternal fire, and that there is no other mode of escape. And they call their own loose and careless views on this subject by the name of charity, and imagine them to be more consistent with the goodness of God than those which he himself has revealed. Now, whether they believe it or not, their views are not only false and unscriptural, they are precisely those of the ancient heathens. The idolaters would have allowed an image to be erected for Jesus in their temples as one amongst many idols. What they found fault with was the universal demand of the first Christians that every idol should be destroyed, and that Jesus alone should be regarded as the object of worship and the author of salvation. But this is evidently the very spirit of Christianity. No blood can cleanse away sin but that which was shed on Calvary; no spirit can sanctify the depraved heart but the third person of the eternal Trinity; no power can open the gate of heaven but that of him who "hath the key of David, opening so that no man can shut, and shutting so that no man can open;" no power can overcome the "strong man armed," who by nature has possession of our souls, "the spirit that now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience," but the power of him who binds Satan in chains and bruiseeth him under the feet of his people. In a word, it can only be from superficial views of

the plan of redemption, and of what is implied in bringing men out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan to God, that any man can imagine that there are more ways of salvation than one. If men would only meditate on the solemn truth, the most wonderful in the records of time as it shall be in the records of eternity, that "God spared not his only-begotten Son"—that Jehovah, in human form, walked this earth, spake with a human voice, and suffered and "died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," he would see that it implies not merely infidelity, but something approaching to blasphemy, to imagine that the salvation of man can be secured in any other way. For if so, God would have spared his only-begotten Son. And hence you will find that the views to which I have been referring are only entertained by men who have no well-grounded conviction of the truths of the Word of God, and who wish to make a broad way and a wide gate into heaven, only that there may be the better prospect of their own admission, although they are resolved to continue in sin whilst grace abounds.

Nor, my friends, is there any ground for imagining that the doctrine of the text is at all inconsistent with just views of the benevolence of God. Such an idea proceeds from the most superficial views, and is the very reverse of just. Suppose a body of men cast ashore on a desert island—suppose them smitten with disease, and famishing for lack of bread—suppose nothing before them but the prospect of certain death, and that in such circumstances one solitary ship was descried making towards the island, and that on its arrival it was not only loaded with bread but carried an infallible physician, who offered not only to supply the wants and heal the diseases of the people but to carry them to a land where they should hunger no more, neither thirst any more, where none should say I am sick, and where there should be no more death—what would you think of the perishing men if they objected to take the bread and the medicine, and refused to go with this gracious benefactor, but preferred to starve and die on the barren island, because there was *only one* ship by which to escape, *only one* physician, *only one* supply of bread,—because vessels had not been sent to all sides of the island, and bread of various kinds, and physicians of various qualities? Would you not think them insane and deeply ungrateful? Now this is the very case before us, only not nearly so strong. The whole race of Adam have been cast away on this distant world to perish and die. They have no spiritual food, and they are smitten with a disease which is rapidly hurrying them away to the second death. But lo! one vessel of hope comes from the bright shores of the eternal world; it bears a divine physi-

cian, the bread of life, and the balm of Gilead—an offer is made to every soul, not merely of a full supply of all their spiritual wants, a perfect cure of all their diseases, but of a safe passage to that land where “the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne leads and feeds his people by living fountains of waters, and God the Lord wipes away all tears from their eyes.” And what are we to think of such as object to this, solely on the ground that God has not sent many deliverers instead of one; and instead of hailing the glorious offer, and labouring to prevail upon every man to do the same, stand by callous and indifferent, and imagine that somehow or other they will escape, although death and famine are raging around, although the cold grasp of the destroyer is on them already, and although they neither enter the ship of safety that is lying in the harbour nor see another sail over the whole sweep of the horizon, nay, although they are assured by the Divine Saviour himself that this is the only opportunity they ever shall have of deliverance? Yet these are the very proceedings and reasonings of such as are not alive to the doctrine of the text.

But, again, to make this point more clear, let us suppose that men were already where all sinners who flee not to Christ will soon be, in the place of punishment,—let us suppose that the gates of perdition were finally shut upon them, and that in looking round upon that region of outer darkness not one ray of light could be seen,—let us suppose that, like the rich man in the gospel, they looked across the hopeless gulf which shall for ever separate the spirits of light from the heirs of condemnation, and saw no way of escape, and that, in answer to their cry of agony, one door of hope was opened, by which they might make an eternal escape—one messenger of peace was sent to intimate that for a very short period they might still flee, by this one door of escape, from that tormenting flame,—do you think it would occur to them to object to this arrangement, on the ground that there were not more ways of escape than one opened up? Do you not see that they would be overpowered with joy that there was any way of escape at all? And yet the case is nearly as strong with a world lying under condemnation. The men are under sentence of a broken law; for there is none righteous, no not one; and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. They are as completely surrounded here with Jehovah’s power, and as unable to escape, as they shall be in the place of woe; and if they repent not, and flee to Jesus, they are as sure to be cast into outer darkness as if they were already there. And if they were not blinded by Satan, they would see that, so far is it from being a mark of want of benevolence on the part of God that there are not many ways of salva-

tion, it is a special mark of his wondrous love that there is one—one way of escape, one Redeemer, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him, and who hath declared, that whosoever cometh he will in nowise cast out. This one way of escape is of such a kind as at once to teach us the difficulty of our deliverance, the impossibility of more plans of salvation than one, and the matchless and adorable love which condescended to regard us at all in our low and lost estate, whilst the angels that sinned were cast down to hell, and confined to chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day.

II. Having thus cleared away a natural objection of practical infidelity, let us now explain the precise import of the language of the text. The language is peculiar, although the general idea conveyed at once strikes the mind of every reader. We are said here to be saved by the "*name*" of Christ, a word obviously used to signify Christ himself. This is a mode of expression sometimes used in Scripture; as, for example, "the *name* of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run thereto and are safe," where by the name of the Lord is meant God himself. This mode of expression has been transferred to our own language. We speak of the "greatest names" of antiquity, and of men filling the world with the "terror of their names," when in both cases we mean not the *names* but the *persons*. And so we are saved by Christ himself, although in Scripture we are said to trust in his name. "In his *name* shall the Gentiles trust," i. e. in his merits, in his perfect righteousness, in his finished work and exalted intercession. "His *name* shall be called Jehovah our righteousness."

The form of expression also, in the first part of the verse, is peculiar. "Neither is there salvation in any other." The apostle does not represent Christ as giving salvation as a thing without himself, a thing disconnected from himself, but as a thing existing in him, as a great treasure-house of spiritual blessings—in him as the head of his mystical body—in Christ, from whom all the members united to him by faith derive strength, nourishment, and salvation. There is here, therefore, not only a general but a special doctrine taught. The *general* doctrine is, that Christ is the only Redeemer as he was the only Creator; and that he, and he only, is able to create us again, in glory and perfection, as he was to make us at first. The *special* doctrine is, that this fulness of mediatorial power is laid up in Christ as in the head of his church, and that it descends from him upon all his members, like the holy anointing oil from the head of Aaron, which flowed down to the skirts of his garments. The *general* truth is, that Christ alone hath removed the curse

of the law and silenced the accuser of the brethren. He hath died, tho just for the unjust, that he may bring us to God, and is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The *special* truth is that it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and that we become partakers of all the blessings which he hath purchased only when by faith we become branches of the true vine, living stones in the spiritual building of which Christ is the chief corner-stone. In a word, this statement embodies not only the general truths of the Gospel, but a declaration of the special method by which the blessings of the Gospel are applied.

The blessings of the Gospel are laid up "*in Christ*" as the infallible Head of the Church. The blessings of the first covenant were laid up in Adam, but he sinned, fell, and squandered the inheritance of all his children. The second Adam can never fall, neither shall any pluck us or our hopes of salvation out of his hand. The inheritance of many children are entrusted to their parents who abuse the trust, lose the patrimony, and leave their children to beg; but in Christ our inheritance is safe, and therefore "he is able to save unto the uttermost." We know not the blessings of which we stand in need, and in so far as we do know we are not in earnest to procure them. We are not only miserable but blind; but Christ knows our wants, and in him there is provision for them all. He is the great storehouse of spiritual blessings, and all the promises of God are in him, yea and amen; so that if any man lack blessings, temporal or spiritual, let him ask of him who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not.

And these blessings are in no other. "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering." The merits of saints only exist in the imaginations of blinded idolaters; for every saint is by nature a child of wrath, even as others; and if the saints reach heaven themselves, it is only because they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. If we desire blessings we must go to the Master of the house direct, for none of the servants can supply our wants. We must become members of his family, nay of his body, and then all things shall become ours, whether things present or things to come, or life or death, all shall be ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's,

III. Let us now, in the *third* place, show the concurrence of Scripture in the truth of this text. The whole stream of revelation from the beginning points to Jesus and his finished work. The *law* which was given by Moses pointed to that grace and truth which were to come by Jesus Christ. The *prophets* prophesied beforehand the coming and

sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glory that should follow; and to him bore all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth on him should receive the remission of sin. The first dawn of prophetic light in Eden, amidst the wreck of a fallen world, pointed to Jesus. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." Christ was the seed of the woman. On the cross Satan bruised his heel, and at that very time he bruised Satan's head—spoiled principalities and powers—making a show of them openly—triumphing over them in it. He is the seed of the patriarchs in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. I say of the *patriarchs*; for you will find that the promise which was first made to Abraham was repeated afterwards in nearly the same words to Isaac and Jacob,—“In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” a statement explained by Paul when he says, “He saith not seeds, as of many, but seed, as of one,” and that one Christ, who endured the curse of the law and wrought out an everlasting righteousness. Even already it has been fulfilled in the experience of myriads, “an exceeding great multitude which no man can number;” but it shall receive a more glorious and literal fulfilment when the Jews shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles, when nations shall be born at once, and from the rising of the sun to where he goeth down the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea. He is the “Shiloh” foretold to Jacob, who was to come before the sceptre departed from Judah, and unto whom the gathering of the people was to be. He is the Messiah introduced by David when sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offering were declared to be unavailing, saying, Lo! I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will I delight, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart. He is the “Redeemer” of whom Job speaks, who should stand at the latter day upon the earth, and whom the patriarch was confident he would see with his eyes although worms destroyed his body. He is the “day’s man” of whom the same patriarch speaks, who should lay his hand on us both, *i. e.* the offending and the offended party, and so make peace. He is the “mighty one,” raised up from amongst the people—the “man of God’s right hand”—the Son of Man whom he made strong for himself. He is the “stone” which the builders rejected, but which was to become the head of the corner. He is the Saviour of Solomon, “set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere even the earth was.” He is the “child” of Isaiah, whose name was to be called “wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” He is the “root of the stem of Jesse,” who shall stand for an ensign to the nations, whom the Gentiles were to seek, and

whose rest was to be glorious. He is the "king who was to reign in righteousness," the "man who was to be a hiding-place from the tempest, and a covert from the storm; rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He is the servant of God who was to be given for a covenant to the people, and a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, and to bring the prisoners and them that sit in darkness from the prison-house. He is the messenger of God, anointed to preach glad tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound; and therefore when he was on earth, and entered a Jewish synagogue, and read as the usual lesson of the day this beautiful passage, we are told that he gave the book back to the minister, and said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." "And who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" The Messiah himself will answer the question. "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Why art thou red in thine apparel and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" The Messiah will answer again. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." He is the "righteous branch" of Jeremiah that was to be raised up to David, in whose days Judah was to be saved and Israel to dwell safely, and whose name was "to be called Jehovah our righteousness. He was the "Messiah" of Daniel, who was to be cut off, but not for himself, "the ruler of Israel," to be born in Bethlehem Ephratah, the least among the princes of Judah. He is the "desire of all nations" spoken of by Haggai, who should suddenly come to the temple of God—"I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." He is the man whose name is "the branch" spoken of by Zechariah, who should build the temple of God and bear all the glory—the king who was to come lowly, and having salvation, riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass. The angels of heaven filled the air with melody at his birth, and announced that the great deliverer had at length arrived. The star of the east pointed the wisemen to the manger of Bethlehem where the infant Saviour lay. The Spirit of God descended like a dove, and rested on his head, and a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him. John, who baptized him, pointed him out to his disciples, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Old Simeon, when he took Jesus in his arms, said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Philip said to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the pro-

phets did write." Peter, James, and John saw the Messiah on Mount Tabor, arrayed in robes of light, and "heard a voice from the excellent glory saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." And hence Peter in one of his epistles says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the coming and the sufferings of Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice we heard when we were with him in the holy mount." The woman of Samaria said, "I know that Messias cometh; when he is come he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I who speak unto thee am he." Jesus said to the man born blind, whom he had cured, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus saith, thou hast both seen him, and it is he who talketh with thee." The evil spirits that he expelled, the deaf and dumb and blind that he cured, the dead whom he raised, the angels that ministered to him, the sun that was darkened at his death, the rocks that rent and the graves that were opened, all the prophets that spake before the Saviour came, and all the eye-witnesses that record the facts of his history, unite in assuring us that he is the only, the omnipotent, the all-sufficient Saviour.

And what was the uniform doctrine of the apostles? Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to sinners their trespasses. In him alone we are chosen from before the foundation of the world; called in time, justified, adopted, sanctified, saved. It pleased the Father that only in him should all fulness dwell. Even as there is but one God, so there is only "one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary.

Hence the song of heaven is full of Christ's atonement. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, be glory and dominion for ever. Hence the most wonderful and glorious object in heaven is the adorable Redeemer in the midst of the throne, "as a Lamb that had been slain." Hence the "white robes" in which all the ransomed of the Lord, of every age, and nation, and kindred, and tongue, are arrayed, are robes which have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Who are these that stand in white robes, and whence came they? These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "And I beheld and heard around the throne a great company, and their

numbers were ten thousand times ten thousand, even thousands of thousands, and they fell before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and dominion, and power, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

If a ladder were let down from heaven, and if an angel were sent to say, "Come up hither and I will shew thee the wonders of the sanctuary above;" when you gazed round that region of glory, the greatest wonder you would behold would be Jesus, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, the Lamb of God, the great centre of worship and influence. If you were permitted to speak to the glorified inhabitants of that blessed place, and to ask them in what way they reached the realms of glory, they would all give the same answer. Adam, if in glory, went there through the second Adam, the Lord from heaven; Abel by faith in the coming sacrifice of the Messiah; Noah by means of the true ark of God; Abraham because he saw the day of Christ afar off and was glad; all the patriarchs because "they died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off they were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" all the apostles, because they "determined not to know anything but Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" and all the martyrs, because "they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Where are the self-righteous multitudes who despised the perfect righteousness of Christ and went about to establish a righteousness of their own—the crowds of worldly formalists, whom false churches impiously professed to send to heaven? They are not there. No one is there who will not rejoice to cast his crown at the Redeemer's feet, and to join in the blessed anthem of eternity which will for ever fill the arches of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." For other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ; and whosoever falleth on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder.

If, therefore, there be any truth more clearly revealed in the Word of God than another, it is that of the text, "Neither is there salvation in any other."

1. From this subject, therefore, we may infer the hopeless state of such as continue far from Christ, or trust for salvation out of him. "They that are far from him shall perish;" and one of the objects for which he shall come again is to punish such as "know not God and obey not the gospel." Mark, the awful result is the very same whatever state you are in if you are not in Christ, for there is salvation in no other. He that abideth not in me is cast forth as a branch, and is

withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire. Do you speak of the mercy of God? What greater proof could he give of his mercy than in not sparing his only-begotten Son; but it is the very mercy of God you are despising; and if you trample on the offers of his love, if you are determined to be saved in your own way, and not in the way of God, you are not to wonder if you find yourselves barred out of heaven, and left to perish in your own devices. Christ is the way to heaven, Christ is the door, Christ the shepherd, Christ the mediator, Christ the king, Christ the intercessor, out of him you have no promises—nay out of him God is a consuming fire—but in him “God seeth no iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel.”

2. If these truths have been brought home with power to your souls, happy are ye. “Who is like unto thee, O Israel! a people saved of the Lord.” Be assured that he that hath begun a good work will carry it on until the day of Christ. The smoking flax shall be kindled into the light of the perfect day. The feeble shall become as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. But,

3. Press forward to higher attainments. You must hunger and thirst after righteousness; you must grow in grace and in knowledge; you must ask, knock, use every effort, and, above all, call down by prayer that grace without which ye can do nothing, but with which ye can do all things. Watch over yourselves with a godly jealousy, and let it be your desire that ye may be *like* Christ here that ye may be *with* Christ hereafter. What miserable self-deception abounds in this world. Luther tells us that in his unconverted state he knew some who fasted and prayed, and did penance, and yet open infidels behaved better, and murderers died more peaceably than they. So, alas! is it now. Many come to the house of God, but in works they deny him—they do not to others as they would wish others to do to them—they are liars, drunkards, swearers, covetous, tyrannical. “Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.” Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

But if men are not saved it is not because Christ is not a sufficient and a willing Saviour; it is because they love darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil—because Satan hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of the peace of God shall shine into them. All fulness dwells in Christ. Mark the expression. It has been *in him* for ages. It is an unchangeable, inexhaustible supply of grace. The well of salvation is full, although many have in ages past drank of it. The water of life is pure as ever

though myriads have washed in it and become whiter than the snow. The riches of Christ are undiminished, although they have already enriched an exceeding great multitude which no man can number. Come in, therefore, O, sinner! why standest thou without? It is for you the Master calleth. Flee to the stronghold thou prisoner of hope; even to-day, saith the Lord, will I render double unto you. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIII.

UNBELIEF—ITS PUSILLANIMITY, IMPIETY, AND RUINOUS
CONSEQUENCES.

BY THE REV. JOHN GRANT, ROSENEATH.

"How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness and grieve him in the desert! yea they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand," &c.—PSALM, lxxviii. 40.

"I will therefore once more put you in remembrance, though you already know this, that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not."—JUDG, 5.

OF the Church of God in the world, it is true, as of the world itself, that, with much that may be called variety, there is substantial sameness, in all ages, in its condition. When Solomon surveyed the earth, he said, "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north: it whirleth about continually; and the wind returneth again according to his circuits," &c. When we contemplate the history of the Church from the beginning, we may adopt much the same language in reference to the identity, mixed with diversity, which comes under our view. One generation passes away and another cometh, but the foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knoweth them that are his, and the Church abideth for ever. The light of truth, like the sun in the natural world, has risen and sunk into darkness, and risen again; but the truth, the sun of righteousness, is not thereby affected—it is not expended nor lost; and the obscurations, although they affect the condition of the Church, do not produce any change on *the Truth* itself. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. God's spirit, like the wind, blows at one time more revivingly than at another; but God's spirit, like the divine nature, is unchangeably the same. In all ages believers have enjoyed the same privileges; they have eaten of the same spiritual food, and drunk of the same spiritual drink; they have had one Lord, one faith, one baptism of spirit, one God and Father of all, one calling, and

one hope of their calling. Their trials and dangers have also been similar as to their effects; bearing, at one time, on the growth of their knowledge and their faith; and, at another, on the open profession of their attachment to Jesus. There is a *classification of temptation* in the Scriptures, which embraces all that have ever assailed the heart of man,—viz., *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*. There is one root to which all sin can be traced, viz., unbelief in the heart, if not an evil heart of unbelief; the failing of faith in God's children; and the entire absence of it in those who know not God and obey not the gospel. From this sameness or similarity of condition, it is that, in religion, we can reason from the past history of the Church to the present, and derive instruction and warning from the events of one age, applicable to the conduct of the Church in another, although, in many respects, differently situated. Hence the Apostle Jude adduces an admonition to Gentiles, as if they were Jews—“*I will once more put you in remembrance, though you already know this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.*”

When we thus look on the condition of the Church, in one aspect, as being as unchanged by the lapse of time as the earth and the everlasting hills, and yet, in another, as partaking of all the mutability of man, and of the world, we are prepared to find that, with circumstances of unfailing security in its condition, it is, nevertheless, not entirely beyond the reach of danger and loss. The Church, and every member of it, true to Christ the Head, true to the treasure which she possesses,—although in frail and earthen vessels,—true to herself and her mission on earth, is encompassed with God's favour as with a shield. God changes not, the truth does not change, and Christ is ever the same; and so long as a Church, or a soul, cleaves to them, we can discover only marks and evidence of divine security. But unbelief detaches the hold from the Rock of Ages—from an unchangeable Saviour, and his unchanging word. In consequence, so far as unbelief prevails in individuals or in Churches, they are exposed to wander, they cannot but fall into sin, and ultimately into ruin. Hence the opposite effects which attend the opposite states of faith and of unbelief, in individual members, it may be, of the same Church, are illustrated in the blessings which fell to Caleb and Joshua, and in the destruction which overtook those who believed not. Hence the necessity, in our addresses to a promiscuous assembly, of reminding our hearers of the hazards, as well as of the security, of God's professed people; and of endeavouring to impress the fear which the one should awaken, as well as to animate the heart with the confidence which the other should inspire. To rejoice even in God's grace without trembling,

is not the kind of rejoicing which becomes adopted children in the sight of the Holy One of Israel. That assurance which cannot co-exist with fear, is not assurance warranted by faith, but a conceit of security—a mere presumption.—Having been engaged on past Sabbaths in directing your attention to the confidence belonging to God's people, we intend at this time to point attention to the dangers to which they are exposed. In the spirit of the apostle's language, "*we will therefore put you in remembrance, although you already know it, how that God having saved the people out of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.*"

I. Let us endeavour to apprehend the spirit of our text, and the convictions present to the apostle's mind, when he occupied the point of standing from which he contemplates the visible church.

Several things are presupposed in the language of our text. In the salvation of man, memory has its province as well as faith. Knowledge, like the light, must enter the soul, and remove its darkness. But if knowledge be of a vague and indefinite nature, it has no hold on the convictions, and no power on the heart. And yet truth, once well known, may fade from the view, and become, although not entirely forgotten, yet practically inoperative in the life. Faded impressions, then, need to be revived, and forgotten truths recalled, so as to be ever present, as a light from heaven, shining on the soul and path of the man, and guiding him in all his purposes and acts, in a world of darkness and sin. The light of God's truth, pre-eminently so called, is the revelation, not of the purity of his law and nature, nor of the unity of his Godhead and the supremacy of his government, but of the reality and fulness of his grace. It is true God is revealed as a God of holiness, the Holy One of Israel, but along with this as a God of grace; the grace is that of the Holy One of Israel. His word is a promulgation of grace, but of grace as a means to the production of holiness in man. His throne is a throne of holiness, but also of grace. The sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness, but also of grace. And his dealings, which reveal his purposes towards mankind, have been dealings in righteousness, but also in grace. At the fall of man—in the deliverance from Egypt—in the privilege under the law—in the promulgation of the gospel—in the reformation from Popish error which we now enjoy—and in the circumstances of our individual history, this one character of love and kindness towards men, or grace, can be variously but clearly traced. It is implied or presupposed, however, in our text, that, notwithstanding all this manifold grace of God, one, and another, and many, may ultimately perish, and "*that we may receive the grace of God in vain.*" Grace where received,—that

a, where perceived to be a reality,—where understood, and accepted with gratitude from the hand of God, *the Holy One*, by a self-conscious sinner, must have a powerful effect on the sinner's heart, uniting or attaching him in grateful love to God, and quickening him to newness of life, in which he shall desire and aim to please God rather than himself. But although this grace has been fully revealed, how many of those who bear of it treat it with infidelity and neglect? How many who profess to receive it, obviously shew that they have never intellectually apprehended its nature, nor felt its influence at all? And others, who expect from it pardon of sin, in some way or other, content to comfort themselves with the idea of this personal boon, plainly evince that their hearts are as contracted and selfish as ever they were, and that it is not the grace of the Holy One of Israel which they have received, but some ideal immunity from a future evil which they would prudently avoid. They may reject the errors of Popery, scorn the phantoms of superstition, and of the priest of Popish or of Protestant name, assert the mental freedom of man, and yet never come under the humbling and sanctifying influence of grace as bestowed by God on themselves as transgressors deserving to die. A sense of grace received has never expanded their hearts in generous love, either to God or man. But our text not only implies the possibility of all this, but assumes it as a fact that grace may be abused to lasciviousness (verse 4); so that those who have externally received grace, may become eminently more godless and wicked, than if they had never known of its existence. The Scriptures frequently refer to the tendency of the unregenerate heart thus to abuse the grace of God. "Shall we go on to sin," asks the apostle Paul, "because grace abounds?" The history of the Church shews that this abuse of God's grace may be reduced to an Antinomian system, which it were well if it could only be found where the name of Antinomianism is admitted or known. But it is the system of every unregenerate man who holds the truth in unrighteousness, and of all who view the gospel, or represent it as if it were solely a method of obtaining pardon. The day is past when any will venture openly to attempt to reconcile a life of immorality with a profession of faith in Christ. And yet, in secret, in its own delusion, and to its own undoing, the heart of the unregenerate professor will consolingly accomplish this work for itself. In consequence of this tendency, when the gospel was first preached, there were to be found such sins in the Church as were not so much as named among the Gentiles. From the same cause, how often has it been seen, that a knowledge of the truth has made some to evince a deterioration of common feeling, of conduct, and character, which contrasted sadly with their former selves, and with the class of mankind with which they

had been identified, before they assumed a profession of religion. But it is unnecessary to do more at present than to awaken our minds to this fact, implied in our text, and which made an old divine say, "If we would seek for the foulest toad, we must turn a stone in the temple of God." For, although we may not be involved in the judicial blindness implied in reconciling gross sin with a profession of faith in Christ, we may so far abuse grace, as that because we know that it abounds with God, we give ourselves a guilty latitude when professing to follow Christ; take occasional if not habitual liberties in opposition to the letter and spirit of God's word; connive at partial indulgences in ourselves and in others; excuse ourselves from trying duties, or yield to slothfulness and unwatchfulness in God's service. The tendency of grace, received in truth, and its final effects on the soul, are the destruction of sin. A sense of grace received is a well of water, ever springing up within, invigorating and cheering the heart in the work of faith and labour of love; for sin, it is said, shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace, and animated by its influence, or by a sense of the love and kindness of God. But, what Christian can say that he experiences this as its uniform and invariable effect upon himself, and that he never needs the exhortation of the apostle, "to fear lest a promise being left him of entering into rest, he may come short of it through unbelief." Let us then often survey the Church from the point of view from which the Word of God is addressed to it; and regard ourselves and others, not only as responsible for our privileges, and advancing to a general judgment, but as living under a system where we are all either obtaining or forfeiting promises along the way, according to our faith or unbelief and abuse of grace. And let us especially remember, that although he saved the people out of Egypt, yet *God the Saviour afterwards destroyed them that believed not.*

II. Having placed ourselves on the point of view from which the Apostle surveyed the dangers to which professed Christians are exposed, let us consider the fact to which he specially directs our attention, viewing the sin in the light of the description of it which the Psalmist gives.

"How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness and grieve him in the desert!" And often did the Lord destroy some of them. But we shall confine our remarks to that one occasion on which the Lord swore that they should not enter into his rest. The frequent reference in the Word of God, to that passage in the history of the Jews, plainly admonishes us, that the Spirit of God designs, that it should be seriously and constantly kept in view, by the Church, to the end of time.

God, who *saved them out of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them!* "Their unbelief was the cause of their destruction; yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." Numb. xiv. 12.

1st, In order that we may receive the full benefit to be derived from this alarming example, let us *first* notice the stage in their history when they so grievously sinned against God by unbelief.

We find that, in a period of little more than a year, the Lord had brought them from out of the house of bondage in Egypt, through the perils of the wilderness, to the very confines and entrance of the land of promise. The journey was accomplished in fourteen successive marches, for they continued a long time at Sinai, where they received the law. God declares that in these fourteen marches, "those men which have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these *ten times*, and have not hearkened to my voice." Numb. xiv. 22. It would be easy to trace, at least, ten instances of provocation; but it is enough to remark, as displaying the grace and forbearance of God with his stiff-necked people, that, in almost every march, or at every stage throughout their journey, they tempted God. God had visited them with marks of his anger, and slew some of them, but he still carries them forward, continues to be their God and guide, and conducts them to a point where their journeyings had come to an end, and the promised land now stretches out to their view. Moses said to them, "Ye are come to the mountain of the Amorites which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold the Lord thy God doth set the land before thee; go up and possess it as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged." (Deut. i. 21.)

Now, our text implies that all to whom the gospel comes, are brought by God to a similar point in their history, or placed in similar circumstances at every call of duty. It is necessary to feel the reality of this fact of similarity of condition. A moment's reflection suggests to us the blessings set before the children of Israel. 1. They were called to take possession of a land of surpassing fertility, and to enjoy the rest and advantage of a fixed home. 2. They were called to the expulsion and extermination of the occupiers of that land, under whose iniquities it groaned and cried to heaven for vengeance. 3. They were called to the high honour of exaltation from slavery to the enjoyment of an independent and free national existence. 4. They were called to the possession of all the religious blessings and privileges connected with living under the law. And to all these, as a step to the better country, even the heavenly, all these blessings and pro-

mises to their fathers were guaranteed by God with an oath. His miracles, which they saw in Egypt and in the wilderness, afforded every confirmation that God was able to fulfil his word; and they had no cause to fear or to be discouraged whatever obstacles might arise. We, like them, are called by God to take possession of blessings guaranteed by the oath of God to Abraham's spiritual seed. The kingdom of Christ, with all its blessings, is brought near to us, affording a rest to the weary and heavy laden traveller of the world. Wherever the gospel comes, every man is called to go up and possess. But this kingdom and its subjects have enemies,—the devil, the world, and the flesh,—and as the Jews would only find Canaan a rest, in proportion as the Canaanites were destroyed, so those who go up to possess the kingdom of God, must engage in conflict with these enemies, and only expect perfect rest in the degree to which the destruction of these enemies of Christ and their souls, is accomplished. Civil and national greatness attends the progress of true godliness. The greatest portion of true happiness which can bless the earth will be found in the spiritual fellowship of Christ's kingdom. And all the blessings of time are the prelude and the pledge of the glory of eternity. Such are the heritage, the promised rest, and the "heavenly places," to the possession of which we are called by the gospel. The one unrecalled command standing from age to age is, Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Sinners! go up and possess; fear not, neither be discouraged; behold the Lord hath set the land before you.

2d, Let us next consider how the people treated this command of God.

Did they at once obey God's command? No. Did they positively refuse? Their disobedience did not manifest itself in that manner at first. Moses tells us that the people "came near to him and said, we will send men before us, and they shall search out the land by what way we must go up, and to what cities we shall come." (Deut. i. 22.) Some of you may say, could anything be more reasonable or well considered on the part of the people, or more becoming a wise man like Moses, than instantly to adopt the proposal? You may ask, is it not proper, in all important and hazardous undertakings, to exercise all necessary forethought—to imagine every turn which circumstances may take—to consider every impediment which may occur—and every contingency which may arise—and thus to forearm ourselves against every possible danger? Such reflections have certainly the sanction of wisdom and prudence; and wisdom and prudence are not only admissible, but required to be exercised by all who regard the Word of God, which calls upon us to count the cost of whatever step we take. On ordinary occasions, therefore, and in common affairs, the man who will not exercise such reflection and caution deserves to fail. But you must observe

the peculiar circumstances in which the children of Israel were placed. They had the direct, unquestioned, and unequivocal command of God to go up. They were relieved from what is often the most trying position, in which the truly upright man can be placed—viz., uncertainty or doubt as to what is the path of duty to which God calls him; and, in order to determine which, he feels it necessary to summon all his resources of wisdom and knowledge to his aid. The path of duty was clearly placed before the children of Israel. They had the assurance that God himself would provide for every contingency and hazard; and from the experience of his past dealings, they had no ground of fear or discouragement. We see, therefore, that faith is consistent with the most rigorous exercise of reason. We may consider the difficulties in the way of obedience, in order to be prepared to encounter them; but it is the triumph of faith to rise superior to difficulties, and to disregard improbabilities, in the path of clear and unequivocal duty. To weigh the expediency of obedience, is to regard our own convenience more than God's will and approbation, and to look at our ease and interest rather than our duty. To put human wisdom and foresight in the office which God hath reserved for himself, is at once to dishonour and limit the Holy One of Israel. When God's command is clear, no evasion of it is to be sought for by us, if we would avoid the danger of being given up to the devices of our own hearts. When God gives a promise, no worldly considerations—no unlikelihood of appearances should shake our confidence respecting its ultimate fulfilment; for he that said it shall he not do it? the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall hasten it in his time. This first hesitation, therefore, to go up, this prudent expedient, was in itself no small sin, and evinced the operation of the evil heart of unbelief. It formed part of the turning back and limiting of the Holy One of Israel of which the Psalmist speaks; as if God were not able to get for himself renown, and for his people possession of the land, by the destruction of the Canaanites, as he had previously won glory to his name, by the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea.

But is this conduct of the children of Israel without its parallel among us, in our treatment of the call and the commands of the gospel? Are there no expedients to which we have recourse, by which we modify the authority and uncompromising severity of the Word of God; and by which, while we would fain persuade ourselves and seem to others that we are following the Lord fully, we are actually, from fear and unbelief, regulating our steps by an ungodly prudence? How many shifts has the sinner recourse to, before he yields himself up to Christ alive from the dead; and which, too often, prevent many from ever yielding themselves at all as servants to God? With what qualified,

tremulous reliance, do we rest on the promises of the gospel? And when self-denial and separation from a world lying in iniquity, and the cultivation of habitual walking with God, require of us to go in directions opposite to those whither the desires of the flesh and of the mind are inclining and urging us,—to what expedients have multitudes betaken themselves in order, if possible, to serve God and mammon, and to enjoy both the pleasures of time, and those which are at God's right hand? Have we never detected the hypocrisy and unbelief of our hearts in such practices and evasions; in an attempt seemingly to obey God, yet truly to avoid mortifying ourselves? What fear of reproach for Christ! What sensitive shrinking from the sacrifice of reputation with the world, of ease and of substance, which the path of duty sometimes demands! What reluctance to cast our burden unreservedly and implicitly on the Lord! What suspicion and distrust of the reality of God's grace and pledged presence with his people! Have we not often fainted in wretched unbelieving abjectness of soul, like Israel weeping at the report of the spies all night in their tents; or adopted precautions which in every aspect were marked as they were dictated by unbelief? And how much have we looked at all this as mere infirmity, perhaps something better, as judicious, wise, and worthy of men of sense, and overlooked the inherent unbelief from which it sprung? We have been far, indeed, it is to be feared, from regarding every such act and state of mind as a turning back, a tempting of God, and a limiting of the Holy One of Israel in his grace, his wisdom, or power. We may often have been guilty of this, when we have put prayer in the place of action. Was it not this sin which God reproved in Moses (Exod. xiv. 15.), when he said, at the Red Sea, "Why criest thou unto me? speak unto the people that they go forward?"

3d, Let us observe how God deals with those who, by unbelief, had shrunk from the course to which he had called them.

Did God instantly visit their transgression with judgment? So far from this, he bore with their abject timidity and dishonouring distrust. He permitted Moses to approve of the proposal of the people to send spies. Moses says, "the saying pleased me well, and I chose twelve men of you, one of a tribe." (Deut. i.) It would seem, however, that Moses did not give his assent at once, and that he first consulted God regarding it, as the pious Judges and Kings of Israel were wont to do on all subjects of moment. We infer this to have been the case; for, in Numbers xiii. 1, the suggestion of the people is spoken of, as if it proceeded from the command of God. "The Lord spake to Moses," we read, saying, "send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan," &c. It is impossible to harmonize this passage, with that which informs us

that the suggestion came from the people, on any other principle than that which we have stated, that Moses had consulted God, and that God permitted him to comply with it. Accordingly, the twelve "rulers" go forth to explore the land, and find that it surpasses their most sanguine expectations. They support the account of its fecundity, by samples of its produce, having carried with them clusters of grapes from Eschol, such as neither they, nor the people had ever seen before. "Nevertheless," said the spies, "the people be strong, the cities walled, and very great; moreover we saw the children of Anak there." The disheartening effect of this intelligence on the hearts of the people, was such, that, when commanded to go up, they refused to obey. They were deaf alike to the remonstrances of Caleb and Joshua, who had been of the spies, and to those of Moses, who said, "dread not, neither be afraid of them; the Lord your God, who goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did in Egypt before your eyes; and in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how the Lord bare you as a father beareth his son, in all the way that ye went until ye came to this place." Persisting in their unbelief of this oath-secured presence of God, the anger of the Lord burned against them. This sin crowned all the past, and was aggravated by every possible enhancement of guilt. It was a rejection of God's guidance, and a limitation of God's grace and power. It was a giving the lie to his promise and oath, that he would bestow the land upon them, and that, too, without putting it in God's power, so to speak, to fulfil his word and oath. God threatens to disinherit them, to destroy them with pestilence, and offers to make of Moses a nation greater and mightier than they. (Numb. xiv. 11.) This threat was designed to indicate what their sin deserved. He forgives their sin (v. 20) upon the intercession of Moses, so far as to mitigate the punishment. But he swears in his wrath that he would destroy "all from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me; and your little ones which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and ye shall know the land which ye have despised."

Thus it was, that those whom God saved out of Egypt he destroyed in the wilderness. Although they forfeited Canaan and perished in the wilderness, that does not imply that they perished everlastingly; for Moses forfeited his entrance into Canaan, and these unbelievers had space given them for repentance. Besides, unbelief may incur the loss of some blessings, when it may not forfeit all. We are not merely to bear the fact in mind, that they forfeited the land and were destroyed of God, but the circumstances, also, connected with the loss. The land was promised to them by an oath, and they are excluded from it by an oath. The punishment was not sudden, but slow. It pursued them re-

lently for forty years. It overtook them all, although a great multitude, so that combination among transgressors is no security. And it overtook them when almost safely put in possession of what God had prepared for them. Hence we learn that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God—the Holy One of Israel.

And this destruction, with the circumstances attending it, becomes more alarming when we think of the various forfeitures of blessings which God's word contains; and that, although Israel was as the sand of the sea, a remnant only is saved. Esau lost his blessing, and found no place for repentance, although he sought it carefully with tears. Those saved out of Egypt, we see, perished in the wilderness. Of the twelve tribes, ten are soon cut off, and lose the blessings of their covenant. When Christ appeared, and the gospel was preached, but a remnant believed. And of those to whom the gospel presents the strait gate and narrow way leading to life, many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. Many shall say Lord, Lord, at the judgment-day, and the Judge shall declare—I never knew you. Ought it not, with such facts before us, to be a frequent question—Are we in a safe condition? I will put you in remembrance, although ye already know it, that he that hath the Son hath everlasting life; he that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him—and that because he is in unbelief. Are we perishing on the very confines of the kingdom of heaven, and bringing on ourselves a curse of exclusion by unbelief, after God has placed every blessing within our reach. In all ages there are some who do not, and who cannot, enter in, because of unbelief. Are any of us of that class?

1. The first lesson which we learn from the admonition of our text is, that it is with the very same God who destroyed unbelieving Israel that we have to do. A delusion is apt to creep over the minds of men, as if, because God's grace is now more fully revealed, his nature is now more gracious than when he revealed himself as the holy and jealous God who is a consuming fire. He is the same unchangeable God. He was as much a God of grace when he destroyed Israel, as when he sent his Son into the world. And he is a God as holy and jealous and sin-avenging at this day, as when he destroyed Israel. Otherwise, the admonition of Jude would have no ground on which to rest. The greater or less fulness of revelation which God gives of himself does not affect his nature any more than the obscurity or brightness of a day affects the brightness or nature of the sun.

2. Mark the grace of God as exhibited at the period when he destroyed them who believed not. He permitted the spies to be sent. He bore with the pusillanimity and unbelief of the people; and so he

always does in no small degree. He calls his people to walk by faith, and yet he bears much with them when they walk by sight. Thus our Lord said to Thomas, "reach hither thy finger," &c., "and be not faithless but believing." But God, although he thus graciously tolerate much unbelief, does not prosper his people in the expedients which they adopt under its influence. We see how their expedients to make duty more easy, turned to be their snare. He exhibits to his people themselves, if not to others, that when they refuse to walk uprightly and implicitly to obey his word, he will leave them to wander according to their heart's lusts, until their wisdom proves itself folly, and their own ways contribute to reclaim them. They thus learn, that to go forward in their own strength is to forfeit strength which God imparts. His past dealings are a sufficient guarantee that he has only purposes of grace towards his people, when to themselves the prospect may seem to be darkest. He that provided salvation from the ruins of the fall—he that spared not his own Son—he that converts the erring sinner, warrants all his children to reason with the mother of Samson, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a meat-offering and a burnt-offering at our hand, neither would he have shewn us all these things." And thus, amid all their fears, his language is, "Fear not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah xli. 10.) But unbelief, if it prevail, puts away this consolation, and God who imparts it, together; while faith makes the weak magnanimous and strong, and able to say, I will go in the strength of God the Lord.

3. You learn from the fact to which our attention has been turned, that faith is not of efficacy, by any arbitrary appointment of God. Some, it is to be feared, regard faith as if it were required merely by God's authority, as a work and duty, and view God as only avenging himself on unbelievers, when they refuse to yield what he demands. The facts brought before us, and the reasoning of the apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews (chap. iii. iv.), prove that, while it is true that, whatever God commands, becomes our duty, yet that, in the nature of things, and without violence to that nature which God has bestowed upon us, it is impossible for us to enter into God's kingdom and rest, so long as we abide in unbelief. As the captain who would lead an army to victory must possess their confidence—as the parent who would be successful in training his children in the way they should go, must enjoy their affection and esteem—and as every teacher, who shall be able to educate his disciples, must possess their respect for his ability to instruct—so must the God and Captain of our Salvation possess the unfeigned and unwavering faith of his people. "Lo I am with you always," is his

promise. "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence." 'Tis his power which truly achieves the conquest, and we but swell the triumph of his grace and power. *Believest thou this? Canst thou go in the strength of God the Lord and his promise?*

4. We learn also that unbelief is not a trivial but most heinous sin. Many who confess their sins against the whole decalogue, have never yet intellectually conceived the nature of this sin. There may be no flagrant act of open iniquity where it is found; no serious breach of morality before the eyes of men; and the sin need not stand broadly to view, like that of the golden calf. It operates at the seat of spiritual life in the heart within—it is only suspicion, distrust, doubt, questioning, shrinking, and simple inaction—it is hearing, and merely turning a deaf ear—it is receiving a promise, and not patiently waiting for it—it is receiving a command, and refusing to go forward—it may repose in security under various coverings, and obtain the name of several virtues. But as the word, the promise, and the command come from God, it treats the Holy One of Israel with as much contumely and distrust, as God says to the charge of Israel, when they turned back, tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. It is attended now with as certain and merited a forfeiture of spiritual and heavenly blessings as it was in the case of the Jews, with the loss of Canaan and their destruction in the wilderness. The more secret and subtle this sin is, the more need there is that we be put in remembrance how that that same God who saved Israel out of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.

5. But this passage of Jewish history admits of application to the conduct of communities as well as of individuals. There is ground for apprehension, that the doctrine of God's decrees, instead of forming a source of comfort and strength in arduous and trying duties, is often abused as an apology for inaction, and operates as a sedative on the moral sensibilities and aspirations of the heart. Now, looking at this passage in the history of the Israelites, we find it was God's will, and could have been compatible with God's purposes, that they should have entered into possession of Canaan forty years before the time that the land became theirs. No doubt we find that important purposes were served by the punishment and destruction, in the wilderness, of all that generation of adults which came out of Egypt, and by the adoption of another generation, nurtured for forty years among the wonders of God's dealings, whom the Lord finally conducted into possession of Canaan. When, however, God gave the command to "Go up and possess the land," it was his will they should obey. Had they gone up at God's command, may we not imagine that the condition of the Church in the world, in the present day, might have been in advance of what

we find it to be. It deserves consideration, as Jonathan Edwards remarks, "that we have instances of God's shortening the days of his Church's captivity and bondage, either at the beginning or the end. Thus, the proper time of the bondage of Abraham's posterity in Egypt was four hundred years (Gen. xv. 3), but God in mercy deferred the beginning of their bondage, whereby the time was much shortened. So the time that was foretold, that the whole land of Israel should be a desolation, was seventy years, &c.; and yet from Zedekiah's captivity to Cyrus' decree was but fifty-two years," &c. (*Union in Prayer.*) If periods may be shortened at the beginning or the end (as Edwards calls it), in various ways, in God's grace, we can conceive that it may be consistent with God's settled moral administration that, in his wrath, promised blessings may be withheld from one generation and bestowed in grace on a succeeding one. And, without entering farther on this line of remark, we may merely notice, that in the determination of the chronological prophecy of the man of sin, different eras may be assigned for its commencement; and may it not be that God is waiting to grant an earlier or later accomplishment of the prophecy, as his Church may, or may not, be worthy, and waiting and wrestling to receive it? And, looking on this subject in another point of view, we may ask, when we survey the history of Christ's Church, and mark the timidity and compliances with the world, which characterize different periods, are we precluded, with such a fact before us as that to which our text relates, from believing that it is possible, if not probable, that in our own and in other countries the Church has been driven into a wilderness condition, in consequence of unbelief, when being led, under God's guidance, into a more advanced condition? May it not be that some of those measures and proceedings of Reformers and good men, which have been lauded as wise and prudent, and suited to the times, have belonged to the class of sinful, unbelieving expedients, of which the sending of the spies was one; and that some of the measures proposed, and rejected as rash and unwise, may have belonged to the rashness of faith, which in Caleb, and Joshua, and Moses, and their remonstrances, were so honouring to God; and that the Church of Christ may at this day be suffering the effects of this God-dishonouring wisdom of the flesh in its disunion and desolation.

6. Let sinners, therefore, see that they are, under the Gospel, saved to the extent that the children of Israel were, when delivered out of Egypt, and brought to the verge of the promised land. Immanuel's kingdom stretches out before them, in the promises and privileges of the Gospel, and God's command to them is, "Go up and possess the land." And if any have been so far awakened by God's

Spirit as to understand, in some measure, the better things which God has provided, but are yet halting between two opinions, or turning away sorrowful, like the young ruler, from the requirement to yield themselves unreservedly to Christ's revealed will and authority, let them know, that, in thus shrinking through unbelief, and returning to the world, they cannot engage in the pleasures and pursuits of the world as they did before, at least for a time. They will experience a misery which may fitly be represented by being driven into the wilderness to wander and drag out a dreary life, as if with God's oath sounding in their ears, that they shall not enter into his rest. By the convictions of God's Spirit, and with the light and promise of the word, they were brought to the confines of the promised rest. By resisting and quenching the Spirit, and the feelings produced by his word, they refuse to go up; and, unless the misery which they experience recover them to a sense of their sin, and bring them to yield themselves to Christ, they shall ultimately perish. Let such listen to the admonition of our text. Let also every man, however great his hopes of salvation may be, who shrinks from the trials which lie in the path where conscience tells him it is his duty to walk, be assured, that, on turning aside to any other course, he will find that his cloud by day and pillar by night, the light and approbation of God's truth, will not go before him as they were wont. The testimony of conscience and the Spirit of God which used to cheer him in the most trying circumstances shall vanish, and leave only self-upbraiding, darkness, perplexity, and fears; an example of the condition of those who heretofore were driven into the wilderness. And, although he may be saved at last, he may yet die in despair of salvation. And further, let all remember, that every command of God has its own season. After God had sworn to exclude that generation of Israelites, they purposed as wilfully to go up as they had previously refused. "Nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill smote and discomfited them." (Numb. xiv. 44.) Let us be concerned, that, in all our goings, we have the presence and sanction of the word and covenant of God, and that we move not from our proper position of followers of the Captain of Salvation. Let us be strong in the faith and grace that is in Christ. Let us dread the sin of tempting Christ, and limiting the Holy One of Israel. Then, like the apostle, we shall have cause to say, "Thanks unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." "Wherefore, to-day (as the Holy Ghost saith), if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." (Heb. iii.)

SERMON LXXXIV.

THE LIGHT WHICH LEADETH UNTO JESUS.

BY THE REV. GEORGE GARIOCH, OLD MELDRUM.

“ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy ”—MATTHEW II. 10.

THE glory of the Redeemer, as essentially and emphatically opposed to all that is most esteemed by the men of this world, was wondrously displayed in the very events which accompanied his birth in the flesh. All the pomp and grandeur which the court of an earthly sovereign can furnish in the centre of its attraction—the treasures of wealth liberally poured forth, and the ready and enthusiastic homage of the great and noble in the land, proclaim the auspicious occasion of the birth of an heir to one of the kingdoms of this world,—while the distant provinces, taking up the note of acclamation, resound throughout their borders with the voice of a nation's joy. There was one event of transcendent and unequalled importance, which, as it betokened not the honours of any kingdom of this world, but the glories of the dawn of the reign of the great King of Zion, was marked by all the characters of a heavenly origin, as contrasted with that which is of the earth, earthy. The birth of Messiah the prince, would have had its brightness dimmed and its glory obscured, by any accompaniments of worldly splendour. That which indicates the power and the might of man, is incapable of illustrating the matchless glory of the everlasting God. “ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

The birth of the great Redeemer, unknown to the men of this world, and uncelebrated by their acclamations, had nevertheless an accompaniment of majesty and power that was all its own, which indicated that God in very deed was now dwelling on the earth. Servants of God were waiting for it in faith, and ready to depart in peace when they had seen the salvation of the Lord; angels were sent to announce it; and at the

very time when the Saviour lay in his lowly abode in Bethlehem, there appeared "a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." At this time, too, there came to Jerusalem a few heaven-directed strangers from the east—men of wealth and distinction, if we may judge from what is recorded of them—and they declared that they had seen the star of him who was born King of the Jews, and that they had come to worship him. We stop not to notice the astounding effect of this intelligence upon the minds of Herod and his counsellors. The tidings of the rise and progress of the kingdom of Christ are always annoying and vexatious to the men of this world. The light of the truth is hateful to them. Herod feared that he was to be dispossessed of his sovereignty; and so the unbelieving world are alarmed at the advancement of the kingdom of Christ and the conversion of souls, as calculated to throw obstacles in the way of the attainment of those pleasures of the earth which constitute the idols of the unrenewed heart. Satan trembles for his dominion, and goes forth in greater malignity and power, in order to rescue it from destruction.

All of us, dear friends, are subjects of the kingdom of darkness by nature, and we are dead in trespasses and sins. The Lord sits on the throne of his everlasting justice; he beholds all the children of men, and there is none who are righteous before him, no, not so much as one. Have you felt that your souls are alienated from the holy God, that you have been transgressors from the womb, and that the Lord's free grace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, of which Christ is the mediator, is the refuge to which alone you can flee to be saved from the wrath which is to come? That light, then, which guided the men of the east to Jesus, the one glorious Saviour, who is the King in Zion, and who rules in the hearts of a believing and willing people, is still the only light in which the miserable and the lost can rejoice "with exceeding great joy." The grace of God revealed in the heart, the Holy Spirit manifesting the Redeemer, impart the treasures of God's own wondrous salvation. The world has other stars than that of Bethlehem to guide its course, and the men of the world are eager to walk in the light of them; but, in dependence upon God's blessing, I would observe,

I. That the light of this world is darkness.

When man enjoyed a close and immediate communion with his Creator in Eden, the fullest knowledge of the holy character of God was not hidden from him. But his race is now apostate; and one of the fruits of the fall is that darkness of the soul in regard to the nature and perfections of the one living and the true God which is inherent in every unre-

newed man. Without under-valuing the powers of the natural understanding, it is a melancholy truth, not only proclaimed in the Scriptures, but evidenced in the experience of the unbelieving world, that fallen men, without the teaching of the Spirit of God, are utterly incapable of comprehending the character of Jehovah's glory. They are able to solve the abstruse problems of mathematical science, they can calculate the distance of the earth and other planets from the sun, and they can travel over the mighty waters of the ocean in ships in search of the produce of other climes than their own, but there is no power in the mere intellect of man to enter within the holy of holies—it cannot draw aside the veil which covers the brightness of Jehovah's majesty. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." How little reason have we to be vain of any natural gifts of the mind which are found to be powerless in their application to the most glorious of all subjects on which they could be exercised. It is melancholy to reflect that the energies of the most accomplished intellect are sometimes expended in the pursuit of that secular knowledge which is necessarily imperfect, and which cannot be satisfactory—which, even if it were capable of bestowing an enlarged measure of happiness, has its hollowness and deceitfulness marked out in this, its peculiar character, that it continues but for a season, and can extend its enjoyments no farther than the limits of the earthly sphere by which it is bounded.

In some portions of society, even in lands which make great pretensions to knowledge, mankind are scarcely distinguished by the character of intellect at all, their minds being left almost entirely uncultivated, and a state of darkness existing not removed by many degrees from the condition of the heathen and the savage. And there is another development of the powers of the mind, when the knowledge which is acquired serves only to give a deeper stain of guilt to the corruptions of a degraded soul, and to make the abandoned more expert in the prosecution of their schemes of iniquity. Nor do the highest attainments that can be made in the field of science and literature, bring the soul any closer into the possession of that knowledge which is of God, and which alone is subservient to the work of salvation. Fallen man is in a state of separation from God, and high attainments in merely secular knowledge have sometimes been instrumental in making the separation wider far. The light that directs the understanding of man, is often a wandering star that leads his mind away from God. The consciousness of superiority which is produced by the successful pursuit of human knowledge, very generally begets a frame of mind the most opposed to

the reception of the truths of the gospel of the grace of God. It fills with the pride of a presumptuous confidence ; it induces the feeling of self-esteem, and is, consequently, in a state of warfare with that principle of humility which is essential as a pre-requisite to the attainment of the wisdom which is of God. The man, accomplished in human science, is often sunk in the grossest spiritual darkness, alienated in his soul from the holy God ; and while attempting to climb the highest heavens in his own strength, and by his own mighty efforts, falls into the pit of destruction, along with those whom he has misled—a blind leader of the blind,

How miserable the state of such a soul ! Dazzled with the treasures of its own wisdom, it is too proud to submit itself to the teaching of the gospel, which it considers only suited to the condition of the vulgar and illiterate. And the Lord permits it, while thus exalting itself, to experience the fruits of his displeasure, and the consequences of its own sin. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." The very condition that is fitted to embrace the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, is that of humbleness and docility. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Human wisdom faileth to discover the truth of God ; this is the Lord's own peculiar treasure which he bestoweth according to his will, and upon those, in whose possession it cannot be mistaken for the produce of man's own understanding. "At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes ; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." How wondrous are the ways of God in the dispensation of his own gifts and grace ! How clear is it that, in the work of salvation, God will give his glory to none, and, least of all, to those who are wise in the strength and conceit of their own understanding ! The Spirit of God alone revealeth the truth of God ; he openeth it up to those who are babes in understanding, while the minds of the mighty in intellect are left in ignorance and error. Man, trusting in himself, and in the resources of his own mind, perisheth for lack of knowledge, and the light which is in him is darkness.

II. There is a light which leadeth to Jesus.

Under the conduct of the Spirit of grace, the awakened and anxious soul is guided to the refuge of sinners. While still in the midst of darkness, it was arrested by an invisible, yet irresistible power, and, through all the mazes of a weary pilgrimage, led by a way which it knew not, until it was conducted to a city of habitation, where it might abide. Have you, dear friends, felt yourselves benighted in this world's wilder-

ness?—have you been amongst the lions and the beasts of prey, and heard their howlings?—and have your souls been well nigh given over unto death, fainting in the land in which there is no food for the hungry, and where no streams of living water are flowing? Oppressed and overcome, and ready to perish, in this the day of extremity, the voice of the compassionate Saviour says—“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” A light is shining in the midst of the wilderness, which can guide you even to the very place where the Shepherd feedeth his flock. A light arose in a distant land which be-tokened to the travellers from the east, the birth, in the flesh, of God’s everlasting Son, and they followed it wherever it led, as the polar star of their hopes. It guides them still, it brightens their path, it cheers them in their journey onward; and now, when the city of which the prophet said, “And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah,” stood fully before their sight, and they knew that the Lord of glory, veiled in the likeness of man, was there, that heavenly light which dawned in the land of the east, shone yet in unclouded splendour. Still it went before them, and when at length it was over the abode of Emmanuel, they knew that he was there and rejoiced. They came to the very presence, to the mercy seat, not under the direction of the light of their own understanding, but led by the light which God had given them, and which never failed, till it revealed to them the Saviour. And do you perceive now the need of a heavenly guide? Have you discovered that all the boasted light of human knowledge fails to lead the wanderer who has lost his way, into the place of rest? How ought you to rejoice, that even now the star of Bethlehem shineth? Behold its glory still; it conducteth to the presence of the King. The men of this world see it not, for they are walking in the light of their own understanding. But God giveth eyes to the blind, and the Spirit maketh his own light to shine in the Scriptures of truth. They contain hidden within them the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the Spirit himself unlocks the treasures. It is He who enlightens, and who alone can enlighten the darkened soul of man, and reveal to him the Lord of glory. “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.”

Such of you, dear friends, as have seen the Saviour with the eye of faith, have beheld him only in the light which the Spirit of God hath reflected; and the view which you have had, was not that which was presented by your own understanding. The Spirit manifesteth the Redeemer to the children of grace. The Saviour saith, “He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” If you have got that look of Jesus which ravishes the souls of

his believing people, it can only have been by the Spirit of God enlightening your minds and renewing your wills; and if Christ be to you the chiefest among ten thousand, it is because the Spirit has discovered to your view his great and surpassing loveliness. O that the Lord himself, in the abundance of his own grace, would shew us the marvellous glory of Christ! The world is full of darkness, but if the light of the precious truth of the Gospel of Christ has come unto you, it shall conduct you into the possession of all the treasures of Immanuel's love, and it shall shine forth in your souls more and more into the perfect day.

III. Those who are led to Jesus, "rejoice with exceeding great joy."

The strangers from the east were not ignorant of the value of those things on which the men of this world place their affections, for they brought gifts along with them, and presented them to Him, the blessed one, whom they came to see and to worship. If they had ever before rejoiced in the possession of the earthly treasures, they now rejoiced in the heavenly; and although the star which guided them, led them into the abode of lowliness and poverty, it brought them into contact with "the unsearchable riches of Christ." They might have been before not insensible to the pleasures which the world presents, but when they saw the light which shed its lustre over the very place where the Redeemer lay, they "rejoiced with exceeding great joy." We have all had reason to bless the Lord, for the many temporal mercies which he has been pleased to bestow upon us, and we may have experienced those feelings of satisfaction which, under the good providence of God, they are capable of imparting. But have you found the blessedness of coming to Jesus, and of rejoicing in the possession of that sure comfort, of that true peace, which he bestoweth upon the children of grace? Assuredly all of us have known what it is to be in a state of separation from the holy Jehovah, to live in darkness and guilt and woe, aliens from God, in enmity, opposition, and wrath. Can many of us say that we have escaped from the darkness of that spiritual death, and that "the light of the sun of righteousness" has arisen in our souls? All of us have been in the horrible pit and the miry clay of sin, but has God now set our feet upon a rock and established our goings, and put a new song into our mouths, even praise unto the Lord? We have lain under the curse of a broken covenant, and under the condemnation of God's most righteous law; but O can we say that we have found him whom our souls love, that he has been to us the mediator of an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and that there is now no condemnation unto us, because we are in Christ Jesus? In vain need we speak of any treasures which are upon the earth, but if the light which the Spirit of God

maketh to shine upon a believer's soul, have led you to Christ—yours shall be the peace of saints, and the "joy unspeakable and full of glory." In Jesus, the believing sinner has received the free gift of pardon, for the blood of infinite value was shed, and to him it has been applied. Come ye to this fountain of mercy and wash in it, for it cleanseth from all iniquity; then, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," A pardoned sinner is at peace with God—wrath has passed away from him; and the sense of forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb, enables him to rejoice in Christ. In behalf of all who come to him believing, Jesus, the everlasting Son, hath borne the whole burden of the divine wrath, and endured its punishment. Justice, therefore, as well as mercy, proclaims their acquittal, for even the sternest justice demands not a double satisfaction. God has laid on the glorious substitute, the sins of his believing people, whom he had given to him in the bonds of the covenant. The Redeemer was wounded for their transgressions, he was bruised for their iniquities; the chastisement of their peace was upon him, and with his stripes they are healed. God's own justice condemns them not, for Christ in their room has satisfied its demands; and God's own holiness condemns them not, for the Lord Jesus, in their behalf, has vindicated the rights of his outraged law, and sustained its majesty. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

There is no righteousness by which any one can be justified before God; but a sinless or perfect righteousness; for the Word of God saith, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But there is a righteousness which is infinite and divine—and that is the righteousness of Christ. All who are not in Christ, are living under a covenant of works. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The righteousness of Christ hath been manifested on earth for the salvation of the heirs of faith. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord." If ye will come to Christ believing, ye shall have a portion of his righteousness. The children of God receive it through faith by imputation. And not only have they the righteousness of Christ as the foundation on which their justification rests, but they have the righteousness of grace implanted in their souls by the Holy Spirit. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." Believers, guided by the

light of the Spirit, and abiding in Christ, have peace with God; and, no longer covered with the garments of a human righteousness, they are clad with the white and shining robe of their Redeemer's obedience. If the eastern strangers rejoiced with exceeding great joy, when they saw the star which guided their steps to the humble abode where the Redeemer lay, how unspeakable the bliss of those who see with the eye of faith a Redeemer risen and glorified, to whom God hath given all power in heaven and in earth, by whom they are justified, who rules in their hearts by his Spirit, who is Head over all things to his Church, and who shall sit at the right hand of God as a Prince and Saviour, until he hath made his enemies his footstool! The children's privileges are the children's delight; and whosoever has the witness of the Spirit, has within him the testimony of the joys of adoption into his Father's family: "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"

The earthly blessings, dear friends, which God bestows, are tokens of goodness, and are to be received with thankfulness. But the possession of them is no evidence of covenant mercy, and they are often bestowed upon the wicked "with whom God is angry every day." "The Lord maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." I beseech you, then, to rejoice in the light which leadeth to Jesus—to come unto him as unto an all-sufficient Saviour, that you may be made partakers of that joy which no man can take from you. Under the terrors of God's wrath—under the condemnation of his holy law—and in the knowledge of an unrepealed sentence of everlasting woe, how can ye possibly experience any gleam of comfort, any feeling of joy? If you remain longer without Christ, you cannot tell how soon the day of wrath may overtake you. Even now, the howlings of the storm may be heard, and the tempest shall soon burst with fury upon every house that is not built upon the rock, and level it with the dust. Will you waste your time, then, in the foolish pursuit of earthly joys, in which your souls can have no real comfort—when the terrors of an everlasting death are set before you as the fearful doom of all who have not found the Lord Jesus Christ as the "one pearl of great price?" "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" With a God unreconciled, how awful is it to deal! While you are amused with the glittering toys of life, without having secured the one thing needful, the Lord is whetting his sword, and it shall quickly pierce through every soul that has not found a refuge in the blood of the Lamb. There is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; but if you are not washed in it, God is still your enemy. His wrath is

a consuming fire, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. It is only a false peace that exists where Christ is not. It is the deceitful calm which is followed by the hurricane and thunder-storm of God's indignation. Come, then, to Jesus now—come to the cleft of the rock, and ye shall be safe when the glory of the Lord passeth by.

Dear believing friends—ye who have already, by the light which the holy Spirit of God sheddeth abroad in your hearts, been led to the glorious Redeemer, it is your privilege and your duty to “rejoice with exceeding great joy.” Ye have passed from the gloom of midnight into the noonday of the Sun of Righteousness. “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ;” and, in your own soul's experience, ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To you, the Redeemer says, “Let not your heart be troubled—peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” The language of the apostle to you is, “Rejoice evermore.” It is true you shall have seasons of sorrow ; you may have grace when you do not feel its comfort, and your sins and corruptions at times may hide from you the light of your Father's countenance. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” When the cloud passeth away which obscures for a little season the brightness of the sun, his rays break forth more gloriously than before. Remember, however, that the word is, “Rejoice in the Lord alway.” Mistake not, then, the grounds of your joy. If your hearts be lifted up and exalted with the possession of any of that earthly portion which has been bestowed upon you, God shall take away the desire of your eyes, and ye shall be left to mourn in sadness. Your sins cannot be left unpunished. Provoke not, then, the Lord to anger, nor grieve his holy Spirit. The foundation of your joy standeth sure ; but in these words, “rejoice in the Lord,” the character of it is emphatically set forth. The Lord Jesus is its centre ; He is its beginning and its end. Be grateful for all your mercies ; but rejoice only in the Lord—in the Saviour who is yours—who will have no rival in your affections. If you set up such a rival, the power of the Lord shall smite you, until this Dagon be overthrown. Your language must be, “What have we to do any more with idols ?” As ye would honour the Lord Jesus, who gave himself for you, abide in him, and continue in his love. When the fiery darts of the adversary fly thickest, oppose to them the shield of faith. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” Time is rapidly passing away ; “the end of all things is at hand.” Be faithful unto death, and the Lord shall give you a crown of life. He cometh quickly, and the remainder of your corruption and affliction shall vanish in the day of his appearing ; “and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.”

SERMON LXXXV.

THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

BY THE REV. A. S. PATTERSON, HUTCHESONTOWN, GLASGOW.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God."—Eph. iii. 8, 9.

(Preached at the ordination of a minister.)

In these words, the apostle Paul describes the nature and functions of his ministry. On this occasion, when we meet together for the solemn service of ordination, let us briefly enquire into their meaning, and lay seriously to heart their sacred and salutary lessons. May God grant that, by doing so, we may all be led to perform more faithfully our respective duties; and that thus, too, the connection which may be this day constituted between a pastor and his people may be both sealed and sanctified!

In discoursing from the text, let us consider,

I. The apostle's character as here described—"me, who am less than the least of all saints."

II. The office which he was called to execute—"that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God;" and,

III. The source from which that office was derived—"unto me is this grace given."

I. Let us cursorily glance at the character of St Paul as here described—"me, who am less than the least of all saints."

It is not by any means to be inferred from this description, that the apostle was either no saint at all, or, in respect even of his present attainments, a saint of a very subordinate or inferior class. At the time when he wrote this epistle, he had diligently laboured and severely suffered in his Master's cause, and the epistle itself is fraught with the holy sentiment, and instinct with the pious fervour of an eminently

sainted soul. Neither are we to suppose, that, although St Paul was not only a sincere but a *distinguished* saint, he meant, by the language of the text, to deny that he was either. It is quite consistent with the doctrine, that his writings are fully and infallibly inspired, to admit that, if he nowhere positively asserts his own saintship, he may have been ignorant in regard to its reality. But, with that most important doctrine, it is utterly discordant to suppose, that, in one of his epistles, he denied what was actually true—fer, by doing so, he would virtually have affirmed what was positively false. The expression, “me, who am less than the least of all saints,” then, is just a strong superlative, by the use of which, the apostle affirms—of course, accurately and truly—not that he was no saint at all—not that his faith was feeble and his love was cold—but that, taking all the circumstances of his case into account, his appropriate place was the lowest, or one of the lowest, in the catalogue of saints. One fact, or rather series of facts, more especially, there was, in the progress of his life, that may well be supposed to have led him to this conclusion. It is that of which he makes such humble mention when he says, “I am not meet to be called an apostle, *because I persecuted the Church of God.*” The dark memory of the malignity and rage with which, for so long a time, he opposed the faith and the followers of him who, because he loved the world so well, had lived a life so weary, and died a death so sorrowful, rushed into his mind. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” re-echoed on his ear. The loftiness of the office with which he had been invested, and the riches of the grace which had converted, protected, guided, and consoled him, instead of prompting a vain-glorious feeling in his heart, convinced him rather how wicked he once had been, and how unworthy he still remained; and, under the impression of these sentiments and feelings, he declared that he was “less than the least of all saints”—i. e. one of the meanest and most insignificant of them all.

1. The description which the apostle here gives us of his character must not, on any account, encourage the idea that personal piety can be dispensed with in a Christian minister.

The method of salvation is the same for ministers as for other men; and, in watching for the souls of others, they must not neglect their own. What! are they not “by nature the children of wrath, even as others?” Is not Christ the Saviour to whom they, like the vilest of the race, must betake themselves for pardon and eternal life? Is not faith the instrument by which they, like others, must obtain an interest in the atoning sacrifice? And is it not as true of personal religion in *their* case as in that of men who have even stronger temptations than themselves, that, “without it, no man shall see the Lord?” Ah! what though a man

have treasured in his mind the learned lore by which, for eighteen centuries, the religion of Jesus has been accumulating glorious illustration and defence !—what though his memory be laden with the treasures of a hundred commentaries !—what though his imagination can depict, with an Italian master's power, the radiant countenance of Jesus, and the torture of his awful martyrdom, the horrors of eternal darkness and despair, and the ecstatic joys and hymning choristers of heaven !—what though his manly and clear-eyed intellect can penetrate into the deeper recesses of the truth, and scatter to the winds the dogmas of the heretic !—what though, in silent audience and tremulous suspense, the thousands whom his name, like a magic spell, has gathered around the pulpit where he ministers, hang breathless on his lips, as they discourse their mild or their majestic eloquence !—and what though, willingly descending into the secluded scenes of pastoral labour, he diligently instruct the ignorant and counsel the perplexed, warn the impenitent, encourage the trembling, and strew for the departing pilgrim, with blessed and benignant promises, as if with beautiful and balmy flowers, the path that leads to the inheritance ! Say we that these things are worthless in a minister ? Say we that these things are useless to the church ? God forbid. But this we say, that these things may, to a great extent, exist where there is no saving, sanctifying faith in the minister at all. And this we say, that, “ though he speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though he understand all mysteries and all knowledge,” and have not faith and its accompanying piety, he is, in so far as his own salvation is concerned, “ but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

But it is not the man himself alone that suffers from the want of personal religion, but also all the people of his charge ; nor is it the former only, but the latter also, on whom the benefit of ministerial piety may be expected to descend. Such piety secures or implies a motive to pastoral activity and zeal. The pious minister knows and believes the love of God towards man, and cordially loves him in return. He realizes the guilt and danger of immortal souls, the fearfulness of eternal destruction, and the glory and felicity of the brighter and better world. Those souls he loves, and regards as a charge which his heavenly Father has committed to his hands. Think ye, then, that he can be otherwise than active, diligent, devoted ? Again, personal piety in the Christian minister will facilitate his progress in the knowledge of the truth. As a pious man, he must needs enquire with earnestness into the meaning of his Father's message, so that to him pertains the promise, “ If thou criest after wisdom, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt

thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." As a pious man, he may be expected to be meek, so as to have a security for the fulfilment of the pledge, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." As a pious man, he will surely be a man of prayer—and is it not written, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him?" As a pious man he will have in his own soul the personal experience of true religion; and such experience may often cast a flood of light on the meaning and reality of the doctrines of the faith. Again, personal religion will make a man faithful in the exposition and application of sacred truth. Persuaded that the Bible is the very word of God—that there is but one atoning Saviour—that there are but two conditions in eternity—and that the soul and immortality are matters too serious to be trifled with, he "handles not the word of God deceitfully"—he "warns every man, and teaches every man," and seeks to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." And, though fanatic and enthusiast should be the names with which, as an ardent and honest servant of his Master, he is branded by the world, they would pass by him like the idle wind, were it not that they remind him of the criminality and danger of those by whom they are imposed, and melt his heart into compassion for their souls. Farther, personal religion in the Christian minister implies the habit of earnest and believing prayer for assistance to himself in the discharge of his solemn and momentous duties, and to the people of his charge in receiving the message of God's holy word. And, finally, it secures the influence of an example corresponding to the instructions which he gives—an example such as may prove to the people that he is in earnest when he calls them to a life of faith and piety, shew them what true religion is, and recommend it by the dignity and pleasure which follow in its train. Thus important is personal piety on the part of the minister in its connection with his official conduct and success. And, O, how sad a blank, how monstrous an inconsistency does the want of it imply! What marvel, if, in such a case, Christianity is coldly preached—the glory of the gospel is obscured—the labour of pastoral exertion is avoided—the people practically reject instruction and counsel with the taunt, "Physician heal thyself"—and immortal souls remain unpardoned, unsanctified, unsaved?

2. The description which St Paul here gives us of his character may teach us that, even where an individual is a decided and distinguished saint, the level which he occupies as a religious man may be, in some sense, comparatively low.

The circumstance which may be regarded as having mainly contri-

buted to lower the apostle's place in the catalogue of the saints was this, that he spent so large and important a portion of his life in pursuits that were not only alien from the gospel of Christ, but fiercely opposed to his kingdom and his cause—that for so long and precious a period he hated that Saviour who had so strong a claim on the glowing affections of his heart—remained ignorant of that gospel which formed the very crown and climax of that older system which he so intensely studied, and to which he so dogmatically clung—and persecuted those who were the true friends of Israel, the very pillars of the earth. Ah! when his mind reverted to these days of darkness—the days of blindness and of blasphemy, of malice and of madness—he felt as if much of his transitory life had been lost to the high pursuits and ecstatic joys to which even fallen humanity is called; he felt as if, highly though the Lord had honoured him, the stamp of degradation had not yet been completely blotted from his brow.

Impenitent sinners, is there not in this a monitory voice to *you*? Should you not be prompted seriously to attend to religion *now*, by this calculation—a calculation which even the experience of St Paul confirms—that every year, that every hour, which is withheld from faith and godliness, is withheld from a service delightful, dignified, divine; and that, if you ever become saints at all—and oh! if you never become saints, what other doom save one can be expected to befall you!—you will find yourselves occupying a place the lower in the scale of moral dignity the longer you shall have remained in unbelief and sin?

But there is also another principle which determines the comparative place which a particular believer occupies in the scale of Christian saintship, namely, the amount of his actual attainments. And O, to whatever extent St Paul may have been able to abide this searching test, what a humiliating view might it give, if fairly applied, of a multitude of saints! How many of those who obtain the character, and with sufficient reason, of enlightened and devoted Christians, are, if contemplated in the light of their religious advantages, but faint and feeble after all! And of others, possessed, it may be, of external privileges scarcely inferior to theirs, the faith how faltering! the love how dormant! the ignorance how great! Brethren, if ye would hold an honourable and useful place among the saints on earth, and if ye would wear hereafter some of the brighter coronets of heaven, while ye are warned by the apostle's earlier career, be prompted by the virtues which dignified and cheered his better days, to be "strong in faith," and radiant with the fire of holy love, and willing to be, to bear, to do, whatever your heavenly Master may prescribe.

3. The description which St Paul here gives of himself, as "less than the least of all saints," may serve as a model of humility.

Here, as elsewhere, the apostle reflects on his early life with lowly penitence. And has there not been much in the early life of all of us to warrant the self-same sentiments? Nor in our earlier life alone—in the days when youthful ignorance and reckless hearts so often seduced us into sin—but then, too, when experience had combined with holy writ to speak to us of our duty and our destiny. As ministers, as people, as husbands, as wives, as parents, as children, as masters, as servants, as friends, as neighbours, as human beings, how often have we thought, and felt, and spoken, and acted, as neither men nor Christians should have done? And how just, as well as pointed, is Jeremy Taylor's beautiful remark,—“Humility is truth, and pride is a lie!”

II. Let us glance at the functions which St Paul was called to execute:—"That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."

1. St Paul was called to "preach."

The original word here rendered "preach," means to be the messenger of good tidings. It is a verb corresponding to the substantive translated "gospel." The apostle, then, was to announce the gospel—a message to which the name of *good tidings* may be attached, both because of its *essential* character as a record of God's pardoning and saving mercy, and because of its *relative* character as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

O blessed and delightful view of the Apostle's ministry? He had a gospel to declare. True, it was his to testify that "our God is a consuming fire," and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands." "What seest thou?" said the angel to the prophet. "I see," Zechariah answered, "I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits." "This," said the angel in reply, "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth." St Paul was placed, and so is the minister of Jesus still, in the very circumstances in which Zechariah stood. He saw, as it were, "a flying roll," and it was very long, and it was very broad; and behold "it was the curse which goeth forth over the face of the whole earth." But side by side with the curse, he breathed, yea, thundered forth the offer and the promise of eternal life, and from the broken covenant of works he pointed the sinner's eye, he summoned the sinner's soul, to the covenant of everlasting grace.

As the word here rendered "preach," simply means to be the mes-

senger of good tidings, it is not to be restricted in its application to the public illustration and enforcement of Christian truth. St Paul "taught publicly, and from house to house," and so must his followers in the ministry of Christ. Bear the gospel, ye messengers of heaven, bear it to the house of God, and there, with willing lips and eloquent, announce its holy and consolatory truths. But bear it also to other scenes of pastoral conference. Bear it to the habitation of the man who comes not to the house of prayer. Bear it to the once happy home which sickness or bereavement has made desolate and dark. Bear it to the halls where the joys of earth have left no place for the care of eternity and heaven. Bear it to the school where the young heirs of immortality are reared. Bear it to the couch of the dying. Bear it, not as a spell to fix the fate of the departed, but as a lesson of comfort and admonition to the living. O bear it to the grave of the dead.

2. St Paul was called to "*preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.*"

The expression, "riches of Christ," comprehensively denotes the personal excellence and mediatorial sufficiency of Jesus. These "riches" are called "unsearchable," not because nothing is revealed concerning them, for they constitute one of the chief subjects of revelation, and not because they are no fit theme for human thought—for why then should they have been preached or revealed at all?—but because they are too vast and glorious for human mind, for archangel's intellect, fully to grasp or understand. Yes, brethren, it is even so. Yet the Apostle evaded not the mighty subject. What his preaching *was* you may learn from what his epistles *are*. And, oh! how brightly emblazoned are they all, with his great Master's name! Verily, like an earlier messenger of heaven, "he came for a witness to bear witness of the light;" and whether it be the essential glory of the incarnate God, or the value of the Lord's atoning sacrifice, that awoke his inspired pen to the loftier strains of eloquence, what curious critic can decide?

There are seven constituent elements more especially in "the unsearchable riches of Christ," which, in the name and by the authority of God, the apostle preached. (1.) He preached the divine supremacy of Christ. Some, indeed, there are, who deem the doctrine of our Lord's divinity a point of no great practical importance, and who advise us to let it alone. But the apostle did not let it alone—and a practical doctrine it obviously is. There is principle involved in the very act of believing the explicit, albeit mysterious, declarations of celestial truth. The article of Christ's divinity, too, affects the question of religious worship—for he who disbelieves or overlooks it, withholds from Jesus the homage that is due; he fails to worship him "who is God over all, blessed for ever." Besides, it bears an intimate relation to the doctrine

of the atonement. It may even be questioned whether, in the nature of things, a mere dependant creature could be accepted as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of ten thousand times ten thousand souls. This, at least, is surely clear, that the persuasion of Christ the mediator being really Divine, is fitted to encourage the hope, and to confirm the confidence of the sinner who betakes himself for refuge to the atoning cross. (2.) St Paul preached the prophetic excellence of Christ—disclosing the depths of celestial wisdom which, in person, and by his commissioned messengers, that infallible instructor taught, and making manifest that, in teaching thus, the Redeemer spake the words of God. (3.) He preached the perfection of the Lord's humanity, announcing him for the vindication of the Father's righteousness, and the satisfaction of the sinner's soul, as the spotless lamb of sacrifice, and holding him up, if so be his glorious character might fire the heart and regulate the footsteps of his followers on the earth, as "holy, harmless, undefiled," a specimen of what human nature was in the days of Eden, and of what it yet shall be in the days of heaven. (4.) He preached Christ's atoning sacrifice. Yes, brethren, and no marvel that among the ministers of Jesus, "we preach Christ crucified," is a motto and a watchword still. The doctrine of the atonement is a most important part of the truth on which evangelical and saving faith lays hold. It is one of the great means by which God arouses the careless, and begets Christian feeling in the heart. And, oh! how greatly does it tend to keep the believer's mind at peace—to soothe him when a sense of sin disquiets him—to stir his love to God, his gratitude to Christ, his zeal for souls, into a stronger flame, and to make him willing to depart! But (5.) If the apostle preached Christ as the Saviour on the cross, he also preached him as the Saviour on the throne; and if from his office as the bloody victim, so also from his office as the interceding priest, he drew sound argument to show that "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." (6.) From heaven he descended, as it were, along with him, to earth amidst the thunders of the day of doom. O theme—how solemn!—how sublime! Adventurous task, to preach the doctrine of the Lord, the judge—to tell of the clouds in whose majestic chariot he shall come, and "the flaming fire" in which he shall be revealed from heaven," and the "mighty angels" who shall travel in his train, and the uplifted throne on which he shall sit down, and the scrutiny by which "the secret things shall be made manifest," and the sentences which shall adjudge to their respective portions the millions of mankind! But (7.) The apostle Paul set forth not only the personal qualifications which Christ possesses, but also the benefits which he has purchased and procured for man. These, too, are "unsearchable riches,"—comprehending as they do, in their

glorious treasury, pardon for innumerable sins, acceptance with heaven's Holy Majesty, affectionate intercourse with God, freedom from the dominant influence of sin, guidance in difficulty, comfort in affliction, peace in death, rest in paradise, a glorious resurrection, and eternal happiness in heaven.

Such, brethren, is a glance at the "unsearchable riches of Christ." These our inspired apostle preached, and God be praised if there still are ministers who rejoice to magnify a Saviour so glorious and so good, and long to attract the immortal souls to the salvation of the gospel, by the manifestation of his greatness and his grace.

3. St Paul was called to preach these riches "*among the Gentiles.*"

Converted Jews, indeed, were not excluded from the privileges, nor unconverted Jews from the offers, of the gospel. That gospel was "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed;" and this was its comprehensive call—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But St Paul individually had his sphere of labour assigned him, to a great degree, among the Gentiles; and besides, the reception of the Gentiles into the Church, and the efforts made to bring them to the enjoyment of its benefits, marked a fresh era in the history of the world, and gave a characteristic and glorious peculiarity to the religion of the gospel.

4. The apostle was commissioned "to make all men see what was the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the word had been hid in God."

What the mystery here referred to was, appears from the third and three following verses—"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." From the statement that this mystery, the participation by the Gentiles in the privileges of the Church, and their fellow-heirship in this respect with the Jews, had "from the beginning of the world been hid in God," it is not to be supposed that no mention was made in the Old Testament Scriptures of the reception of the Gentiles into the Christian Church; but that the doctrine, as there propounded, was comparatively dark, and by a large proportion of the Jews remained unnoticed and unknown. The "fellowship" of this mystery is the fellowship to which the mystery referred, and of that a beautiful exposition is given by St Paul himself in the 11th and seven following verses of the second chapter—"Wherefore remember, that

ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Oh, what marvel, if a fellowship like this the apostle delighted to "make all men see"—a fellowship so finely characteristic of that religion which welcomes both Jews and Gentiles to its arms, and of that Church in which "there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," but all are one in Christ?

III. Let us very briefly notice the source to which St Paul attributes his possession of the ministerial office—"Unto me is this grace given."

Here St Paul traces to the free and undeserved goodness of his God and Saviour the fact that it was his to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In like manner, he elsewhere says,—“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.”

1. To his God and Saviour the apostle attributes his possession of the ministerial office; and well might he do so. From them he received his commission to preach the gospel. (Acts ix. 15, xiii. 2.) By them he was animated with that love to God and gratitude to Christ which prompted him to engage in the labours and sufferings of the work. By them he was furnished with those intellectual and moral gifts, and with those miraculous powers, which qualified him for the office. And, finally, by them he was enabled and encouraged to persevere until, in the retrospect of life and prospect of eternity, he said—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

2. The apostle's words suggest that to hold the office of the ministry is a privilege. "A privilege!" some of you may be ready to exclaim, "is it not rather a responsible, painful, and laborious charge?" "Who is sufficient for these things?" the apostle asks; and when a man thinks on what the Christian ministry is—on the physical labour and the in-

tellectual effort it involves, the difficulty of prevailing on men to receive the Saviour, the disappointments to which the minister is subject, and the frequency with which he is called to look down into the graves of those committed to his charge, and weep, not so much over the cold remains, as over souls which, he may greatly fear, have gone unpardoned, unprepared into eternity—Oh ! when a man thinks of these things, and at the same time remembers the solemn responsibility under which the Christian minister lies, what marvel if, for a moment at least, he shrinks from so dread a charge ? Yet, after all, the faithful minister of Jesus feels that, in holding the office of the ministry, he enjoys a privilege for which heart-felt gratitude is due. If that office has its pains, it also has its pleasures ; if it has its cross, it also has its crown. It brings the mind of him who bears it into contact with subjects of transcendent interest and glory. It furnishes him with a mighty stimulus to intellectual study and to Christian piety. If the faithful minister is successful in winning souls, he may take to himself the comfort of that splendid promise—“ They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever.” And even if he seems to be unsuccessful, he has still that promise to resort to—“ Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.”

But oh ! brethren, will ye not “ be gathered ? ” Mighty are the arguments by which we are called to urge you to receive the Saviour by practical and saving faith ; and this day, by the authority of God, and by the love of Jesus, by the glories of eternal life, and by the horrors of “ the second death,” we pray you so to do. And doubt not, brethren, that if, moved by these great arguments, ye indeed, in accordance with the exhortations of your ministers, betake yourselves to Christ by faith, “ their hearts will rejoice, even theirs.” The Christian minister may be accepted of his God, and may speak of his office as a privilege, even though he should seem to have but little success among the people of his charge ; and, in the assurance of his own acceptance, his mind may be free from agitating care. But it is when he is eminently successful—it is then that he enters with heart and soul into the spirit of the expression, “ Unto me is this grace given.” And oh ! how can he be satisfied ?—how can he but have times of painful thought, so long as he has cause to fear that scarcely a single soul has been won by his instrumentality to Christ ?

Brethren, the glory of the gospel, and the importance of the Christian ministry, should admonish you of how you ought to hear the one and to receive the other. When both unite to offer you, from the treasury of Christ’s “ unsearchable riches,” acceptance with your offended God,

pardon for all your sins, protection amidst all your dangers, guidance amidst all your difficulties, comfort in your times of trouble, peace in prospect of eternity, and everlasting glory for your lost and ruined natures—will ye not accept the offer?—will ye not obey the call?—will ye not by faith receive the Saviour?

Finally—Let us, the ministers of Christ, be excited to “live by the faith of the Son of God;” and strong in the strength, and wise in the wisdom of our Heavenly King, to labour in his noble cause.—Amen.

SERMON LXXXVI.

THE SOUL SORROW OF JESUS.

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"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me."—MATTHEW xxvi. 38.

THERE are many precious truths to be learned from the sufferings of the Redeemer. In the school of Calvary we are taught the worth of the undying soul; the sorrows of the Son of God, the amazement and agony to which he submitted, and the bloody sacrifice he offered up, loudly testify to the value of that spirit for whose salvation such a price was paid; or we may learn the riches of a Saviour's love and grace, the vastness of his compassion and condescension; or the inflexible character of the Divine law; or the fulness and completeness of the mercy provided for a fallen world, or the faithfulness and sincerity of Jehovah in declaring that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should return from his ways and live. We do not purpose at present to set forth all that might be stated regarding the death of Emmanuel, nor will we attempt to gather up all the lessons that are strewn around his cross. We limit our attention to one part of "the woes he bore"—the sorrows of his soul; and, approaching such a theme in a spirit of deep humility and prayerful dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost, we would observe,

I. That the bodily sufferings of Jesus, however acute and protracted, could not constitute a sufficient atonement for sin, nor meet the demands of a violated and broken law.

No doubt, in the history of Redemption, we have frequent reference made to the corporeal agonies of the Man of Sorrows. From the very constitution of our minds, and the character of his mighty undertaking, we are often pointed to the treatment he experienced at the hands of ungrateful men; and God manifest in the flesh, wounded, smitten, pierced, dying, is so prominently set forth, that we are apt to imagine that the pains of the cross, which issued in the extinction of life, constituted the main features of his substitution; and so conclude that a soul which has mastered the ideas connected with the laceration of his frame,

the rending of his sacred body, the piercing of his hands and feet, really understands what the Great Surety endured in the room and stand of the guilty. Now, though the soul may well be filled, yea, overwhelmed, with amazement when it reads but one chapter of the bodily sufferings of Jesus, contrasting the peerless glories of that Lord with the humiliation to which he submitted, it must not believe that the endurance of these external inflictions constituted the whole or the principal part of the propitiation made for sin. Iniquity was not so easily taken out of the way, nor was the Saviour's trouble so limited or so light as this. The work to be done was the reconciliation of God and man, on the footing of a magnified law and a glorified righteousness. To accomplish and attain that end, an equivalent must be found in the very outset for the punishment due to man, and deserved by him—an equivalent which, while it involved the pains of an agonized frame, as clearly and necessarily demanded the severer sorrows of a troubled and afflicted soul. This may be made apparent by the following reasons: The body is but the *instrument* through which the soul acts—it is not the *agent* in the commission of evil. The spirit is the moving spring in all deeds of transgression, and consequently, when satisfaction is demanded for guilt, it must be yielded, not by the mere instrument of the crime, but by the living agent with whom the evil originated. Analyze any single trespass, and this principle will become transparent. Take the first grand sin that ruined a world, and drew down the curse of the Lord on countless generations; a casual glance at it would just perceive an impious hand seizing the ripe but forbidden fruit—a covetous eye dwelling on its freshness—a luxurious taste regaling itself with its desired and delightful relish—and man thereby exhibited as a degraded, ruined creature. But surely there is something more in this deed of vice than the movement of the eye, and the hand, and the lip. There is the prior work of sin *within* the soul—the revolt of the heart from its allegiance to God displayed in its communing with a spirit that denied his truth. There is the corruption of the moral nature, as exhibited in the indulgence and entertainment of the thought, we shall be as gods; and there is the resolute determination of the will for creature gratification, to disobey the known and understood commandment of Jehovah. To all this the plucking of the fruit and eating thereof was but the natural sequence; and if so, then, when justice comes forth to avenge, when law, armed with all its terrors, seeks to vindicate its own insulted authority, these ends cannot be attained by smiting the eye with blindness, or crushing the arm that has touched the forbidden tree. No bodily suffering, whether voluntary or constrained, is an adequate compensation for the evil committed. The principal offender remains still unscathed and un-

harméd, and must not be permitted to escape. The soul, with all its refinement of spirituality, must not elude the grasp of the great God it has mocked. The mind that has defied His sovereignty must not shelter itself from wrath beneath the writhings of an agonized body. No ; in righteousness, *the sinner must be the sufferer* ; and, as body and soul are in the transgression, the penalty of sin must include the pains and sufferings of both. And here we cannot help noticing how solemn and alarming a statement this is to unconverted men. Have you ever thought on the penalty due to unforgiven sin ? You see but little of it in time. You know nothing of the torment of an awakened conscience—of the agony of a spirit roused from the slumber of criminal indifference to the horrors of unmitigated despair—of the wretchedness of a soul cleft by the lightnings of God's wrath, and exposed eternally to his awful displeasure. You see a little of the fruit of sin in the poverties, and sicknesses, and disappointment of earth. You taste a little of its consequences in the miseries, and afflictions, and crosses of the world, and you know you are exposed to the sadness of separation from time, to the gloom and the stillness of the grave. But, ah ! *are these the punishments of sin ?* Is this the full tale of the law's demands ? Nay, deceive not yourselves. These sorrows, and that certain death, are but the evidences that the Judge hath his eye and his hand on the rebellious—that there is no escape from his grasp—and that speedily he will deal both with the agent and the instrument in sin, in judgment, and in righteousness, meting out to each a punishment according to its power of endurance and the share it has had in the offence against the dread Majesty of Jehovah.

But again, the sufferings of Christ in his body could not be a sufficient atonement for sin, because they neither equalled nor exhausted the curse and condemnation pronounced by the law against transgression. It seems a plain enough conclusion, that if a substitute is to be admitted in man's room, He, the second Adam, must undergo the very doom pronounced against the first—"in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"—a sentence which, no doubt, implied exposure to an everlasting separation of soul and body from God, and an adjudging of man to the grave, through the death of the body, but which surely included some immediate and certain penalty—the death of the soul. It taught that the Almighty would arrest the transgressor in the very act of his iniquity—that in that hour the soul would be involved in the misery of the curse of death, and judicial exclusion from God's favour ; and by consequence, that there can be no removal of the sentence till sin has been expiated in the sorrows of the soul itself. It is very difficult, no doubt, to conceive of the death of an immortal spirit. We are so apt to

confound the language and the imagery that are applicable only to animal life, with that which is proper to the functions of spirit, that we readily conclude there must be some similarity, clear and marked, between the dissolution of the one and the death of the other ; and hence, when the spirit evinces an activity, and zeal, and enterprise, and affection, though not for God's glory, we doubt the fact and reality of its death. But what is death ? Just a separation from the cause and fountain of life. Now, as the life of a soul flows from its union to the Infinite, and as the main exercises of that life consist in fellowship and communion with Him, it is quite possible that our immortal natures may be occupied with time and creature vanities, be vigorous and lively in the pursuit of the objects that furnish a present delight, yet dead in trespasses and sins, devoid of all love to God, destitute of his image, loathsome as unburied corpses in his sight, under a sentence of condemnation that excludes from his favour, and exposes to his wrath. And when the high penalties of the law came to be exacted—when the period of temporary reprieve is past, the soul must then realize its distance from God—a distance never to be diminished ; and the sense of this eternal separation from the one source of all blessedness and peace, will constitute a mighty element in the second death, and embitter the wretchedness of a ruined state. Oh that sinners would think of this their latter end !

II. Let us contemplate the severity of the Mediator's sorrow, when he made his soul an offering for sin. He suffered much from the temptations by which he was assailed, " for, saith the apostle, we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Let it not be supposed that a pure nature cannot be harassed and grieved by solicitations to evil, with which it has not the least inclination to comply ; for every mind that has undergone the renewing and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, must understand how much the soul may be vexed by the presence of temptation, when it turns with horror from the idea of committing the crime to which Satan or the world allures. Now, although Jesus, from the purity of his manhood and the power of his godhead, was not exposed to those trials that spring from the defects, the innate corruptions, and indwelling propensities of a fallen nature, and was free from those struggles and warrings of a law in the members against the law of the mind that oftentimes afflict believers ; and although there was no possibility of his ever being seduced by external allurements to violate the holy commandments of his Father, he felt keenly the assaults of sin to which he was exposed ; and the very holiness of his being rendered these trials all the more pain-

ful. That mind, unsullied by the stain of guilt, the chosen residence of the Godhead, could not fail to recoil with horror from the very idea of personal transgression ; and although, therefore, all temptation necessarily fell powerless at the feet of the Messiah, the very effrontery of sin and the loathsomeness of evil thus brought into the close and immediate neighbourhood of the Son of God—the very necessity that was laid on him to endure the suggestions, and listen to the insidious wishes of the tempter, were in themselves sources of grief to the Redeemer, and constituted a part of the mental agony to which he submitted when making himself a propitiation for our sins. And yet this soul-trouble of Christ is a comfort to his people ; it tested his purity, demonstrated his holiness, and provided sources of consolation for his afflicted and troubled followers. How graciously the words sound in the ears of a weak believer—"in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able also to succour them that are tempted !" and so the assaults of Satan and of sin were not altogether without effect. They did not overthrow the holiness of that spotless nature, but they dashed into the hidden reservoirs of its divine sympathies, and caused their healing, refreshing waters to flow forth ; and the clefts of sorrow they made in that blessed humanity, are now just so many places of rest and of refuge, to which a tempted believer may flee in his hour of trial for safety and for shelter.

Again, it is evident that the Lord suffered much from the ingratitude and malignity of man. There are few wounds that enter so deeply into a noble and generous spirit as those caused by ingratitude. The amount of kindness and compassion that has been evinced adds all its weight to the cruelty of the infliction, and renders the shock the more crushing to an agonized and smitten heart. What emphasis is there not in the beauteous and touching descriptions which the prophets gave of this poignant grief of our Saviour? There is an indescribable pathos in such testimonies as these—"All that see me laugh me to scorn ; they shoot out the lip"—"Reproach hath broken my heart ; I am full of heaviness ; I looked for some to take pity, but there was none ; for comforters, but I found none"—"We hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not"—predictions which were amply verified in the history of the Lord. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. Notwithstanding his miracles of mercy, he was rejected of man. The outcries, "away with him, away with him," were mingled with no utterances of compassion, and mitigated by no expressions of pity. Betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken by all, he was given over to the unrelenting cruelties of the multitude, who had forgotten his acts of kindness, or only remembered them as means for pointing their sarcasm and giving keenness to their invective.

tives. "He saved others, himself he cannot save!" This constituted no trifling element in the woe of Jesus. The delicacy of his feelings, the exquisite sensibilities of his spotless mind, rendered this sorrow the more acute and trying; while the endurance of it, as it formed part of that curse transferred to the great surety, magnified the patience, and love, and grace of Him, who for our sakes made himself thus poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.

Again, I observe, that the soul sorrow of Christ was produced by the sensible withholding of all comforting communications from heaven, and by the feeling of forsakenness in the hour of his deepest distress. There were two parts in this trial, the one arising from the foresight and anticipation of the approaching evil, and the other springing from the actual presence and pressure of it. Sorrow in anticipation, where the mind is pervaded by an undoubted persuasion of its approach, has a tendency to paralyze the heart, and fill it with an instinctive dread almost as painful as the trouble itself. This, the innocent humanity of the Lord abundantly realized with the precision and accuracy of reality: he foresaw the cross, the ignominy, the shame, the curse, the grave, and his spotless nature would have shrunk from all contact with these tremendous evils had it not been sustained and upheld by the power of his Almighty love. It was this anticipation that passed like a cloud over the serenity of his spirit, on that memorable occasion referred to in John xii. 27—"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." Faith seemed for a moment to be staggered; its language is that of sore perplexity—"What shall I say?" but instantly it recovered its stability, and meekly declared, "but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The actual endurance of the affliction is described by the scenes at Gethsemane and the history of Calvary. These scenes reveal the Son of God weakened, troubled, excruciated by mental distress, as if some invisible hand were pressing to his lips a cup of indescribable bitterness, the very sight of which filled him with amazement and horror, and led to the agonizing prayer—"Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The language in which the inspired writers describe that passage in his life, is very striking—"He began to be sorrowful," as if that man of sorrows had never been in grief before. "His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death;" but the hour when the sensible withdrawal of all divine communication, and the full consciousness of being alone in the wine-press of wrath was most overwhelming, was that in which a burdened heart burst forth in the distressful wail—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Communion with God

was the very life of his spirit, and the cry of desertion indicated that he felt the happiness and joy of his soul ebbing away, and his whole nature tossed amid the billows of unmitigated wretchedness. It is difficult to form a right idea of this portion of Emmanuel's grief,—his desertion is so altogether different from that of a sinner eternally lost, and his despondency in its peculiar features so unfit for comparison with the sadness that occasionally overtakes a weak and timid believer. In the case of a damned spirit, God leaves it for ever. The abstraction of his love and favour, the withdrawal of his grace and mercy, is real and eternal. But in the case of Jesus there was no separation between the godhead and the humanity; the union of the natures remained in all its integrity in the depths of humiliation, and Christ crucified was just as truly God-man, as Christ exalted to the right hand of power in the heavens, hailed with the acclaim of saint and angel, and adored by the whole universe of God as supreme in excellence and divine in glory. But there was a suspension of all the tokens of its comforting presence—the Father *seemed* to retire from that sufferer, his own Godhead *seemed* to be asleep, while his manhood endured the great fight of affliction. This was evidently a part of the curse due to sin. Transgression necessarily separated from God, the nature of iniquity, and the sentence of a righteous law pronounced against it, doomed the guilty to banishment from Jehovah's presence,—so that just as truly as Adam felt his estrangement from God, when the Lord "drove out the man," so truly must every sinner, found out by his own iniquity, feel that he is separated from the fountain of all blessedness, and the source of all comfort; and consequently, when the Mediator stood in the breach as man's surety, and became a ransom in his room, it behoved him to endure this sense of desertion and to realize the depressing feeling of distance from the Father of his love. And ah! how immensely different the sadness thus endured from what falls to the lot of a tried and troubled saint walking in darkness, and mourning because it is not with him as in months past! He never knew the lofty and elevated fellowship with God that was the daily experience of Jesus of Nazareth; he never realized that pure and blissful communion that was his continual enjoyment; he never entered into that reciprocal and inexpressible tenderness of love that arose from the peculiar relationship subsisting between the Father and the Son, and, by consequence, his sense of loss is not for one moment to be weighed in the balance against that anguish which now pierced the heart of the Saviour of the world. Nay, more, when we think of the Christian pilgrim in perplexity because of the want of God's gracious presence, we picture to ourselves a man whose feelings and sensibilities have been

blunted by sin, and not yet absolutely refined and renewed—a creature not yet capacitated for the continued and uninterrupted enjoyment of God—a child of faith, from whom, in condescension to his weakness, the Lord never altogether withdraws the light of his countenance, lest his spirit should fail before him. It may be with him comparatively a day of cloud and gloominess; but there is always the gleam of the twilight—dimness, but not absolute darkness—darkness that may be felt. But this is not the portraiture of the sorrow of Messiah. In him you have a heart attuned to all the harmonies of heaven, characterized by all the delicacy of feeling which perfect piety induces, fitted for unbroken delight in Jehovah; you have that heart brought down from all the serenities of this cloudless enjoyment, and enveloped in a darkness that was like that of hell itself—a darkness and desertion all the more terrific because to be endured in the midst of his other sorrows, and at the moment when subjected to other distresses and griefs. Oh the love of Jesus, it passeth all understanding.

Finally, The sorrow of the Redeemer's soul rose to its height when he did actually underlie and endure the very wrath of God due to our sins. This is a great mystery; and we may not pry into it beyond what is written. It is plain enough that wrath is denounced against transgression, that it pursues the sinner, and that the vengeance and the curse of the law imply severe, positive, and penal infliction from God's own hand. There is more in damnation than the loss of blessing and favour—there is more in hell than separation from heaven; perdition is a state of actual suffering—suffering induced not by the presence of devils alone, not by the operation of man's unbridled passions upon himself, but proceeding directly from the power of the judge: and ere a soul could be saved, or the gladdening note of a completed redemption be sung throughout the universe, the indignation of an insulted heaven must burst on the head of the Daysman, the pains of hell must take hold of him, and the full penalty be yielded to the violated statute before God can be just in justifying the transgressor. All this the Saviour suffered. The particulars of that hidden agony we cannot describe. It is enough for us to know that the hand of Divine justice pressed heavily on his spotless soul—"that he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted—that he did enter the wine-press alone—that at his cross the prediction was fulfilled, "Awake, O sword against my shepherd, and smite the man that is my fellow"—"that the sorrows of hell compassed him about," so that, in the language of the Psalmist, he might say, "Thou hast delivered me from the nethermost hell"—all indicating, that, although there was not here the gnawing of the worm, or the un-

quenchable fire of remorse, or the blaspheming of a despairing spirit, because inconsistent with the essential purities and glories of his exalted nature, the very essence of the curse due to sin was borne and exhausted, so that we may now gratefully understand how there can be no condemnation to them that are in Christ, the Lord being well pleased for his righteousness' sake.

When we review in thought this amazing subject, and mark that we are redeemed not with silver or gold, but with the sorrow, with the blood of the Lamb of God, can we fail to admire the vastness of the price, or to exalt the name of the Lord who so freely and so graciously laid it down for us? The price was sorrow unto death, and that the sorrow of the soul of Christ. Why, if he had been a mere man, this had been a costly gift—for a soul is worth a world, with all its grandeur and glory; but if it were worth ten thousand worlds, with heavens on heavens beside, it were meanness and poverty itself when compared with the worth of the Spirit of Jesus—that Spirit which lodged in close fellowship with the Godhead—that soul which, though human in all its powers and faculties, was girdled round with the perfections of the Deity, and was kept enshrined amid the glorious attributes of the ever-blessed God. And yet it was made a sacrifice for our sins! Surely herein is love—love divine, that ought to thrill each heart with gratitude and attune each tongue to praise. “O, love the Lord all ye his saints.” Behold what manner of love is this. And see what advice and warning this subject gives to unconverted sinners. It tells you, ye must either reckon with justice and law yourselves, or meet their claims with the merit and satisfaction of Jesus. You may trifle for a little with sin, and play with it as with an imaginary evil, but in the end, when the time for repentance and for fleeing to the Saviour is past away for ever, you must encounter the forgotten demands of the law; and learn, when too late, that the refusal of an all-sufficient Jesus is not the way to escape from the pressure of wrath; for to lose an interest in the satisfaction of the Saviour, is to make yourselves the subject of the woe and the curse that are written in the book of God. Why will ye die? Jesus is set forth as a propitiation that ye should believe in his name. Contemplate his work—trust in his merit—cast yourselves in helpless dependence at his feet. Let your prayer be, “Lord, save us, or we perish;” and there may be heard in heaven even now the halleluiahs from angel lips, because a sinner has repented and turned to God. Amen and amen.

SERMON LXXXVII.

JUSTIFYING RIGHTEOUSNESS.

BY THE REV. ANGUS M. M'GILLIVRAY, DAIRSIE.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference."—Rom. iii. 21-22.

Of all the subjects which occupy the human mind, there is none so important as the question—How can man be just with God? and yet there is none in regard to which men are so easily deluded. Conscience tells the man that he has sinned, and it warns him of a coming retribution; and yet, when the question is pressed on him—How do you expect to obtain future happiness?—he either evades the question altogether, or shelters himself in some refuge of lies. And the reason of this is obvious—the man is utterly blind to his true condition and character—he knows not the malignity of the disease, and he cannot, therefore, apprehend the remedy. Ere a sinner, therefore, can even understand the gospel, he must, in the first place, see and realize his own true position under the government of God; and this he can learn only from the Word of God. We are there informed that the Almighty—the God with whom we have to do—is infinitely holy; that his government is characterized by unchangeable purity and rectitude; that under this government disobedience cannot be tolerated; that in every case the wages of sin is death—everlasting death. And the Scriptures plainly teach us that man was not only liable to death in the case of transgression, but that he was further placed under a peculiar constitution or covenant, in which life (confirmed happiness through eternity) was promised him as the reward of perfect obedience to the law during a time of probation. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man that doeth these things shall live by them." Such, then, being man's relations to the government of God, and he being confessedly a sinner, his position as regards the divine government is plainly this: He has failed to obey the law, and he has no title to life—he has

transgressed the law, and he lies under sentence of death. The question, therefore, comes to be, how can a creature, occupying such a position as this, be restored to the favour of God?—how can the government of God remain absolutely unchangeable whilst this creature is saved?—how shall the law be magnified so that it shall open heaven to the sinner?—how shall justice be vindicated so that it shall cease to curse him? And to this question, you have the answer in the text—“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.”

And in attempting to illustrate this important subject, I observe, in general, that the sinner is justified and saved by means of a *righteousness*. This appears plainly from the text, and it appears also from the nature of the case. It was righteousness that God required of man at first,—it was by failing to yield this righteousness that he lost his title to life, and brought on himself a sentence of righteous condemnation; and as the character of God is unchangeable, it is only when he can plead a righteousness ample as the demands of the law, that he can be restored to favour. But, to be somewhat more particular, I observe,

1st, That this righteousness is not the sinners own, but that of another. This truth is plainly intimated in the text, where the Apostle speaks of the righteousness of God without the law, and it is also the subject of his previous reasoning. Having, in chapter i. 17, announced as the grand peculiarity of the gospel, that “therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,” he proceeds to demonstrate the necessity of this righteousness. With this view, he declares, in the 18th verse, the strictness of God’s law, and the perfection of that obedience which it in every case requires—“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;” and having then shown that Jews and Gentiles were under this law—that they nevertheless had not obeyed it—nay more, that they were wholly corrupt, and could not by possibility obey it, he, in the verse preceding our text, draws the conclusion, “therefore, by the deeds of the law”—that is, by man’s own obedience to the law—“shall no flesh be justified.” And yet, in the face of this solemn declaration, what multitudes of immortal beings vainly seek to enter heaven by a door which their own sins have for ever closed against them. Ask that man whose heart is absorbed with the world, what is the foundation of his hope for eternity? and his answer is, that he has never yet been guilty of open, flagrant transgression. Ask that sensualist how he expects to

escape the wrath to come, and his answer is that he trusts his charitable deeds will atone for these infirmities. Ask that professor of religion, who goes the round of all its duties, but whose soul nauseates spiritual piety, how he expects to be saved, and his answer is that he does the best he can—that he is sincere in doing so—and that he trusts God will take the will for the deed, and pardon him at the last. But ye who thus desire to be under the law, “do ye not hear the law;” ye who would be justified by your obedience to the law, have ye really considered what it is the law requires of you? It demands perfect obedience in heart and life ere it will admit you to the favour of God, and it pronounces on the least transgression sentence of eternal death. And have you such a righteousness as this wherewith to meet its demands? Does not conscience tell you the reverse? Have you not broken God’s law times without number? Are not your hearts alienated from God, and incapable of loving him? And is it not, therefore, clear as the sun, that if ever the law relaxes its hold of you, the reason must be not your righteousness but the righteousness of another. I observe,

2dly, That this righteousness can only be known by revelation. And the reason is, that, being a righteousness provided by God, none but God can discover its existence to sinners. The Scriptures inform us that, when God saw us perishing, and when his immutable perfections called for our punishment, even then he resolved to glorify his mercy in the salvation of an elect world, in saving them from sin and wrath, and making them partakers of eternal inheritance. And, in order to this, it was absolutely necessary to provide a righteousness—a righteousness by which it shall be manifest that God is just and holy, and true, when he pardons the sinner, and admits him to favour. Now, this righteousness is revealed in the Bible, and in the Bible alone. You accordingly read, that, in the Gospel, “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;” and you read in the text that this “righteousness is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” It was revealed at first in the garden of Eden as the ground of the sinner’s hope—the whole Jewish ritual was a continued revelation of it—the prophets bore testimony to it, speaking of him who should magnify the law, and make it honourable—and the whole New Testament is a bright revelation of the precious truth, that God himself has provided a righteousness, through which he can be just when he justifies the ungodly. When a sinner, therefore, finds this righteousness, and rests his eternity on it, he receives it in every case as a matter of pure revelation. An awakened conscience tells him of condemnation—a sense of depravity convinces him that he has no resources of his own wherewith to meet the demands of a violated law; and, if he looks around and puts the

question to all creation, How can God be righteous, and I be saved? Creation remains silent, and is covered with darkness. But a voice comes from the Bible which saves him from despair. He raises the eye of faith, and he beholds a righteousness already provided by Jehovah himself, and "the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 6-9.) I observe,

3dly, *That this righteousness was wrought out in human nature.* You accordingly read that it is a "righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ." The circumstances of the case indeed rendered this absolutely necessary. It was on earth that God was dishonoured, and on earth therefore must he be glorified. "The children" (those to be saved) "were partakers of flesh and blood," and their Redeemer therefore "must take part of the same." The first revelation of this righteousness, accordingly, was made in the promise, that there should come of the *seed of the woman* who should bruise the serpent's head; and, in due time, this promise was fulfilled in the stable at Bethlehem—a virgin brings forth her first-born son, and calls his name Jesus, because he is to save his people from their sins. And this he does by becoming the second Adam, and standing in the room of his people as their representative and head. You accordingly read, that, "As by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. v. 19.) In a word, this apostle tells us that he who was thus born of a woman, was "made *under* the law;" that is to say, he met the law as his people's surety, and fulfilled to the uttermost all its demands against them. And, in this character, he obeyed the law. View him coming into the world in obedience to the Father's command—contemplate the zeal for his Father's glory, which marks his ministry from its commencement to its close, and view him as the Father's servant exclaiming in the midst of his sufferings, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done;" and you there see the Redeemer obeying the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." View him going about doing good, healing the diseased, preaching the Gospel to the poor, praying for his enemies, and at last dying for them, and you there see the command gloriously fulfilled, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And, if suffering and

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trial be the proof of obedience, never was obedience so glorious. Devils put forth their highest efforts in order to move him from his steadfastness, and men, guided by devils, obstructed and persecuted him in every step of his progress, and yet this, instead of tarnishing, added to the lustre of his purity. But Christ had to meet the law in another form, and for another purpose. He had not only to obey its precept, but also to endure its penalty. His people were condemned, and to redeem them from the curse of the law, he is made a curse for them. From the night that he was born in Bethlehem till he said on the cross, "It is finished," he had to bear the load of wrath due to his people's transgressions, and therefore it is that the Scriptures call him the Man of Sorrows. His sufferings, indeed, became deeper and more overwhelming as they approached their close, but from the cradle to the grave they were of a penal character. And, being the sufferings of the substitute, they were of the same nature with what the sinner deserved to endure, as far as this was consistent with the perfect purity of his person. Are the trials which man endures at the hands of his fellow creatures part of the penalty due to sin?—Christ had to suffer this, for he bore the contradiction of sinners against himself. Are Satan's temptations part of sin's punishment?—Christ endured this, for he suffered being tempted. Is the wrath of God part of the sinner's desert?—Christ had to bear this, for you hear him exclaiming, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But is not this enough? Must he drink the cup to the dregs? Shall not his life be spared? No; for the wages of sin is death, and Christ therefore is obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Here, then, is the righteousness spoken of in the text—the righteousness of the second Adam—the righteousness which the Redeemer speaks of when he says, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." It answers all the demands of a violated law—it obeys its precepts—it endures its penalty, and therefore it is written that "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, that he hath magnified the law and made it honourable." But here the question arises, How can this obedience and these sufferings, being but the righteousness of one person, obtain eternal life for unnumbered millions? This leads me to remark,

4thly, *That this righteousness is the righteousness of God.* True, the Redeemer was a man; and while on earth, as the Man of Sorrows, he was often so poor that he had not where to lay his head; but under that veil of humanity, faith beholds the great everlasting Jehovah. Without this were the case, the salvation of his people was impossible. He had to make atonement for their sin, to enter as their substitute the furnace of his Father's wrath, and that furnace would have consumed in

a moment the highest of created beings ; and not only so, but the righteousness of a mere creature would have been utterly insufficient. Take not a mere man, but the highest seraph, and let him in human nature obey the law, and suffer and die, and what satisfaction is there to the majesty of heaven ? As a creature, he owes to God already all the obedience he can yield ; and he cannot, therefore, “redeem his brother or give a ransom for his soul.” To accept as the substitute of the sinner any created being, would be just overturning the government of God; destroying its stability and rectitude, and holding forth to creation an encouragement to rebel. No righteousness, in fact, can be accepted unless it be of that infinite character which shall show to the whole universe the unchangeable glory of the law, and God’s determination to vindicate and support it. The righteousness, therefore, through which the sinner is justified is the righteousness of a divine person. You accordingly read that this is the name wherewith he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness ; and you read again that God purchased his people with his own blood. He was God in the manger at Bethlehem—he was God on the cross—he is God now at the right hand of the Father ; and his righteousness, therefore, is the righteousness of God. It is not the essential holiness of the godhead, for that is incommunicable to the creature ; neither is it the righteousness of the man Jesus, for, as man, Christ never had a personality distinct from the godhead ; but it is the righteousness of the Mediator, of God manifest in the flesh, of him who is God and man in two distinct natures and one person ; and as such it answers, yea, more than answers, all the demands of a violated law. It magnifies the law, and renders it glorious and lovely in the view of intelligent creation ; for what higher honour can the law receive than that God himself became its servant, and obeyed all its commands ? It magnifies the justice of God, and shows it to be inflexible, seeing that God’s own Son, when sin is imputed to him, must drink the cup to the dregs. In a word, it establishes the government of God, shows its purity and rectitude, and makes an end of sin, by showing to the universe that, though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not pass unpunished. Here, then, is the righteousness which the Bible reveals as the ground of hope for a sinner—the foundation stone which God has laid in Zion. It is the righteousness of God himself, wrought out and finished in human nature, indeed, but nevertheless the righteousness of him who is God as well as man. But here the question may arise, How does the sinner obtain an interest in this righteousness ? How does it become his so that he may plead it as the ground of his acceptance ? He is a rebel, destitute of all righteousness ; what title has he to plead the righteousness of Christ ? This leads me to observe,

5thly, That this righteousness "is unto all." Christ, as the substitute, indeed, wrought out this righteousness for those who were given him in covenant. In this sense, he gave his life for the sheep; and his finished work not merely puts them in a salvable condition, but it infallibly saves them. But, as revealed in the Gospel, this righteousness is the free gift of God to all men—yes, it is so completely put within the sinner's reach, and placed at his acceptance, that if he once hears of it he cannot perish, without putting it from him and rejecting it. The Bible abounds with illustrations of this truth. The brazen serpent, set up of old within the camp of Israel, was God's free gift to them all—all were commanded to look to it; and just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so has the Son of Man been lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The manna which came down from heaven to support the Israelites in their journey, was given to them all, and was free to them all; and Christ accordingly says to a multitude, most of whom were rebels at the time, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." The cities of refuge were open to every manslayer in the land. And so it is with the righteousness of Christ; every sinner who hears of it is invited and commanded to flee for refuge, and lay hold of the hope set before him. It is, in a word, like the sun in the firmament, whose light is free to all of every nation and clime. The blind cannot, indeed, rejoice in its light, but that arises from no defect in the sun—its cheering beams shine forth alike for the rich and the poor, the just and the unjust. And so it is with the righteousness of Christ. It comes to every sinner who hears the Gospel, and says to him, "Be thou reconciled unto God, for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." This is the peculiar glory of Immanuel's righteousness—that it is unto all, and that it utterly repudiates any limitations of its grace. It asks not the sinner if he have any righteousness, for it knows him to be dead in sin; it asks not whether his sins be few or many—whether he has just entered on a career of vice, or is already a hoary-headed profligate; but, putting all men on a level as condemned rebels, it says to them all, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But are all men saved by this righteousness? Do all to whom it comes in the Gospel obtain eternal life? No. There must be an acceptance of this righteousness ere we are justified through it; and this leads me to observe,

6thly, That this righteousness is upon all that believe.

And, to illustrate this part of the subject, let us take the case of a single sinner, and let us see how it is that this righteousness comes to

be upon him. He has been living, perhaps, in a land of gospel light, and yet, though the righteousness of Christ has been again and again urged on his acceptance, he has been hitherto rejecting it. The truth is, he knows not the God with whom he has to do, nor his obligations to him as his creature; his heart is set on worldly and forbidden objects; and, though uneasy reflections may at times intrude on him, he contrives to banish them, saying, "Peace, peace, while there is no peace." But this peace is at length disturbed, the Spirit of God breathes on the soul, and the word of God comes home to his conscience with a light and an authority which he cannot resist, and tells him that he is perishing. And the consequence is, that the man becomes in earnest about his soul; the great question with him is, how can I escape the wrath to come? And he very soon discovers that he must have a righteousness ere he can be saved. He sees that God is a holy God, who requires the obedience of his creatures, and that to save them without a righteousness is utterly inconsistent with his glory. And the consequence of this discovery is, that the man labours hard to work out a righteousness for himself: he forsakes sin, he performs commanded duty, he denies himself every gratification, he labours in the very fire, and the great question is, Have I yet brought myself into a state in which God shall pardon and accept me? But the Spirit proceeds to shew him, on the one hand, the obedience which God requires, and, on the other, the nature of that obedience which he is yielding. He sees that the law is spiritual, calling for the obedience of the heart, and demanding perfection; and when he attempts to meet this demand, sin revives, the blasphemy and enmity of the heart are discovered, and the man sees and feels that his past obedience has been not only not perfect, but that it has been a mockery of God—that it was but the constrained obedience of a slave and an enemy. But the sinner makes one effort more to build on the old foundation. He hears of faith as the grand mean of saving the soul; he attempts to believe, and persuades himself that he does so; and he then pleads his faith as the ground of his acceptance. But the Spirit in mercy sweeps this away also—the utter hypocrisy of his faith is made known to him, he sees that he does not and cannot believe the gospel, and yet that this is his highest guilt, arising as it does from the pride and enmity of his heart. And now the man feels himself to be wholly lost; he sees that God's law righteously demands perfect obedience on his part—that, instead of being able to yield such obedience, he is dead in sin, utterly corrupt, and that he is on this account most justly condemned. And now at last the Spirit shews him that the very thing he needs has been already provided. Like Hagar in the desert, he lifts up his eyes and sees the well of water which was formerly hid from him. He sees that

Jesus has brought in everlasting righteousness; he sees that this righteousness is unto all and unto him; he hears the Redeemer saying to him, "Turn thou unto the stronghold thou prisoner of hope," and believing this call, as a lost sinner he receives Christ, and rests his eternity on the finished work of Immanuel. And the consequence is, that this righteousness, which was formerly unto him, comes now to be on him—he is clothed and covered with it. Being one with Christ by faith, Christ's righteousness is his own; he is dealt with under the divine government as one who obeyed when Christ obeyed, as one who suffered when Christ suffered, as one who is, therefore, as righteous as Christ is; "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made *the righteousness of God in him.*" And the instant effect is a most glorious change in the man's state and character. All his iniquities are pardoned, for this righteousness has atoned for them; his title to heaven is as complete as it shall ever be, for this righteousness is complete. And not only is his state changed but his character is changed also. Sin has no more dominion over him, for the law, which is the strength of sin, has ceased to condemn him, and the image of God is enstamped on his soul, because this righteousness has purchased life for him. True, this life as it is in him is still weak and faint—it is but the life of a babe, and there is still within him a mass of corruption which has to be destroyed. But then he is complete in Christ his head; his life is hid with him, and the sin that is within him has been condemned and crucified; and the Spirit of Christ that is in him shall continue to increase and strengthen the life and to destroy the corruption till he is made perfect in holiness. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Let me now conclude with two brief remarks in the way of application.

1. Let true believers live, by faith, on this righteousness, and on it alone. And your spiritual comfort, brethren, depends on this. If you look to anything in yourselves as the foundation of your hopes, an element of distrust is introduced into the soul, which will, if cherished, necessarily destroy your peace; but look away from all in yourselves to the finished work of Jesus. Say with the Church, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness," and then you will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And not only your comfort but your usefulness, too, is connected with a simple dependence on this righteousness. Just in the degree in which you look to anything in yourselves as the foundation of your hopes, just in that degree will a spirit of bondage

prevail which will unfit you for duty, and render God's work a burden to you. But look to this righteousness by faith, contemplate its perfection and suitableness; above all things, realize the glory and love of him who wrought it, and who still continues to plead it before his Father's throne, and then you will say with the Psalmist, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

2. Let sinners come to Christ and receive this righteousness, There are gospel hearers whose hope for eternity appears to be, that because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners, they shall therefore somehow be saved. But, my dear fellow-sinners, I beseech you to consider, that whilst this righteousness is "unto all," it saves only those who receive it. It was not enough that the brazen serpent was lifted up on the pole, the Israelite must look to it, in order to be healed; and, in like manner, you must come to Christ and receive him for yourself, just as if there were no other sinner who needed him but you, ere you can be justified through his righteousness. And do not evade the call, by raising the question, Did Christ die for you in particular? With that question you have nothing to do; but you have to do with the glorious truth, that Christ who wrought out a righteousness which infallibly saves every sinner that receives it, is at this moment offering himself freely to you, and that "This is God's commandment that you believe on him whom he hath sent." We beseech you, therefore, in "Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." "Flee from the wrath to come. Flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you."

SERMON LXXXVIII.

INSUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

BY THE REV. G. CRAIG, SPROUSTON.

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."—MATTHEW xix. 16-23.

In interpreting our Lord's language or conduct, it is often of the utmost importance to keep in view the fact that he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. It was this supernatural knowledge which enabled him to meet with such address and triumph, the ensnaring questions which were from time to time proposed to him by malicious foes, under the deepest disguise of inquiring friends; and to adapt his discourse with such precision and power to the secret thoughts and character of those with whom he came in contact, in the course of his ministry. Indeed, much of what our Lord said and did, derived its tone and manner, and even substance, more from what he knew, by his omniscience, of those with whom he came in contact, than from what was outward and apparent in their character and conduct. It is from an oversight of this circumstance, in part at least, that the true meaning and end of the conversation in the text has been sometimes lost sight of, or perverted by preachers and expositors, as will be made to appear, we trust, in our subsequent remarks.

The young man came requesting an answer to an all-important question; but our Lord, being intimately acquainted, by his omniscience, with the young man's character, and state of mind and heart, gives his answer and the subsequent conversation such a turn, as was most suitable to the character and spiritual condition of his interrogator. And as a right apprehension of the character and spiritual condition of the young man, will help us to a right apprehension of the text, let us in the outset inquire, what his character and spiritual condition were. They may be

easily and satisfactorily discovered from the text, and the parallel passages in the other evangelists—Mark x. 17-23, and Luke xviii. 18-24.

In the Gospel by Luke, the individual spoken of in the text as a young man, is said to be a ruler; and, therefore, a youth of some rank and education and influence among his countrymen. In the Gospel by Mark, he is represented as running toward our Lord, and kneeling before him. His running shows his eagerness to propose his question, and his kneeling and the terms of his address show his respect and willingness to learn. His professed obedience to the commandments shows that he was a youth of superior moral character; and when it is said by Mark that Jesus beholding him loved him, we are led to consider him as a youth of amiable, ingenuous, and serious dispositions. Our favourable idea of his character is still farther enhanced, when we are told that he had large possessions; for the use which he made of them was not such as to lead him into those excesses into which riches too often lead their possessor, especially when young and inexperienced. He was young and in authority, yet not arrogant and overbearing. He was young and very rich, yet not licentious. He had learned the law of God, and from his boyhood had striven to keep its precepts, yet he was desirous to learn more, and for this purpose had come to Jesus. He believed in the doctrine of a life to come,—had regulated his conduct by that belief, and was now eagerly desirous to know whether he had anything more to do in order to obtain the life eternal for which he had hitherto laboured. We have here the character of one who seemed not far from the kingdom of heaven. But he was not perfect—that is, he was not all that is necessary in order to obtain eternal life. His character was defective—defective in the principal thing required. He fell short of salvation.

Let us now, in the farther exposition of the passage, attempt to show what it was that our Saviour required, in which the young and promising inquirer was deficient.

The first thing, which helps us to discover the young ruler's deficiency, are the terms in which he addresses our Lord, and the reply which his address called forth. He addresses our Lord with the title, "Good Master." And our Lord replies, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." Now our Lord cannot be understood to deny that he was, what the young man called him, good; for he elsewhere claims to himself the very character which the young man ascribes to him, saying, "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Math. xx. 15.) Nor can he be understood to affirm, that the title good, is not in any circumstances, nor in any sense, to be applied to any human being; for he himself so applies it, when he says, "Well done thou *good* and faithful ser-

vant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. xxv. What, then, does our Lord mean to affirm ? We are told that the title, "Good Master," was one which was usually applied to the Jewish doctors, and one which they greatly affected. They are well known to have been a self-righteous and arrogant class of men, loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. They scrupled not to arrogate to themselves commendation, not only in the judgment of their fellow men, but in the judgment, nay, on their very knees, in the presence of the holy God, saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Now, the young man applies the title "Good Master" to Jesus as a Jewish doctor; but as a Jewish doctor Jesus will not receive it. He will not allow the youth to suppose that he participates with the lawyers in the self-conceit and self-righteousness which such a title implied in them, gratified in them, and fostered in them. And he, without doubt, considered the solemn caution, "There is none good but God only," all the more necessary, that, by the eye of his omniscience, he had discovered the same self-righteous disposition in the young man himself, as we shall immediately see. Meanwhile, let it be observed, that Jesus does not bring out what he meant to inculcate at once, or in plain and full terms. It is in an indirect and inoffensive manner, that he assails what he saw to be wrong in the young man's views and spiritual condition. He might have at once and openly assailed the pride and self-righteousness which had come to be associated with the title "Good Master," as well in the young man who used it, as in those to whom it was usually applied. But he adopts the wiser, less offensive, and more effectual method of calling his attention to what true moral goodness is, as displayed in the character of God, that, by the contrast, he might see how worthless that goodness must be which he ascribed to his fellow-men. And, as the young man evidently saw in Christ nothing more than a man, Christ's humility, in not allowing the title to be applied to himself, but in so solemnly reserving it for his God, would commend the lesson all the more powerfully to the young man's heart. On this, however, our Lord does not insist ; but having, in a single sentence, and in passing, given him to understand what genuine humility is, as exemplified in his own conduct, and what true moral goodness is, and in whom alone it is to be found—having thus far assailed him in his stronghold of self-righteousness—having shown him what a man ought to be, ere he can with strict propriety receive the title, *good*—after telling him, by implication, that there is no man really worthy of it, and thereby laying the foundation for the very opposite of self-righteous doctrine, he proceeds to give such an answer to

the young man's question as he foresaw would still farther reveal his self-righteousness, and afford an opportunity of inculcating more directly the humbling and essential doctrines of the Cross.

The young inquirer asks, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answers, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." It is then asked, "Which?" and Jesus answers by specifying the commandments contained in the second table of the law. It is maintained by those who are hostile to the doctrine of justification by faith, that the purpose which our Lord has in view in this conversation is, to inculcate obedience to the moral law, as the means of obtaining, if not of meriting, eternal life. But it is altogether fatal to such an idea, that he here particularizes a portion only of the moral law, and that the least important—the first and most important table being altogether, and evidently with a design, omitted. Such an omission, we conceive, could not have been made if he had intended to inculcate the doctrine of justification by works. He certainly does mean to lay down, inculcate, and proceed upon the principle, that obedience to the law, when it is such as the law requires, will obtain as its reward, eternal life. This, however, he lays down as a principle, not with the expectation that such obedience as the law requires could be rendered by the young man, or by any man, but with the intention of conducting from that principle, by the several steps through which he is afterwards led, to the principle with which he concludes—the principle of faith; for his last injunction to the young man, and his final answer to the question put by him, is, "Follow me," that is, believe in me.

But why was it that our Lord particularized only the commandments contained in the second table of the law? Evidently, we conceive, to give an opportunity to the ingenuous but self-righteous youth to disclose still farther his self-righteousness, by saying, "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" For, had the first table been particularized, it is but charity to suppose, that the ingenuous youth, though self-righteous, was not so boldly such, as to affirm with respect to the first table of the law, what he affirms with respect to the second. And this is all the more certain from the circumstance, that before laying claim to uniform obedience to any of the commandments, he desires them to be specified, by saying, "Which?" Our Lord knew that it would not serve his purpose to take him up on the first table of the law, or on that command which is the sum and substance of them all, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." He knew that if he had taken such high ground, the young man's self-righteousness would not have been brought out into such

prominent display as to serve his purpose. He, therefore, designedly confines himself to the second table.

And even with respect to the second table of the law, our Lord might have called in question the truth of the young man's boast, when he said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." For, with respect to the first of the commandments enumerated, "Thou shalt do no murder," he might have reminded him that "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;" and with respect to the second, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," he might have told him that "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart." To convict him of disobedience to the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," he might have given him the parable of the good Samaritan, or he might have given him the principle of that parable in his own striking words, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." In short, with respect to all the commandments enumerated, he might have said to the young man, as he said to his disciples and the assembled multitude—"Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is too much for charity itself to suppose that the young man was guiltless with respect to any, but especially with respect to all of these commandments, when understood in their length and breadth and spirituality; so that the question, "What lack I yet?" must be ascribed to a self-righteous spirit. Like many, who are more accustomed to think of their good deeds than of their bad ones, the youth had, without doubt, been more accustomed to foster a spirit of self-gratulation, than of self-examination and self-condemnation. True, he was amiable, and upright, and thoughtful about eternity; but he was not the less, on the contrary, he was all the more disposed to magnify his merits, and forget his shortcomings. It is the most moral man, that is most prone to pride himself on his morality, and build upon it. As long as we are out of Christ, and unhumbled by his cross, attainments in morality are but attainments in self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. Yet our Lord does not, as he might have done, and as a less wise instructor would have done, take up the self-righteous youth on his undoubted though disavowed shortcomings. To have done so, might have led to controversy respecting the traditions, by which the Scribes and Pharisees had made the commandments of God of none effect—bereft them of their spirit and their power to convince of sin. He purposely avoids a position from which the young Pharisee might have taken up disputations argument in his defence. He deems it enough to have told him in the outset what true goodness is, and where

alone it could be found; and having now drawn him out to make a statement respecting himself, which, on more private and mature consideration, his own conscience would tell him, was unfounded and full of arrogance, he proceeds forthwith to try him on a point on which he knew that the young man would be found wanting, even in his own estimation. And perceiving the youth's ingenuousness and earnestness respecting his future well-being; and that from his boyhood he had so kept eternity in view, and had so made conscience of keeping the law of God, that he could with some plausibility assert that all these things he had kept from his youth up; perceiving these things, and knowing the severity of the trial to which he was now to be subjected, Jesus now addressed him with great tenderness and affection. For it is at this point in the conversation, as Mark informs us, that "Jesus beholding him, loved him;" that is, cast on him a look of tender and compassionate affection. Nor is this tender and compassionate affection at all incompatible with the idea, that the young man had formed too high an estimate of his own attainments, and rested too much upon them for his soul's salvation. He was in earnest about salvation, and had conscientiously laboured all his life long that he might secure it, amid such light as he could enjoy in a grossly self-righteous age; and these are qualities well fitted to attract the notice, and call forth the compassionate affection, of him who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; and the compassionate affection of the Saviour would be all the more intense, that the earnest and ingenuous youth was now to learn, that he was not so near the kingdom of heaven as he supposed, but had yet a harder task to perform than all his previous working put together. "If thou wilt be perfect, says Jesus, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me."

This is our Lord's answer to the immediately preceding question, "What lack I yet?" But it is of the utmost importance to observe, that it is his final answer to the question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life." The drift of the whole conversation evidently points to this as the true and final answer to the young man's first inquiry. The first answer, "Keep the commandments," is evidently only preparatory, and paves the way to this final one. If, therefore, we take the conversation as a whole, it shows conclusively, and most satisfactorily, that they greatly err who take the answer, "Keep the commandments," as the only and final answer to the momentous question, "What must I do to be saved." They greatly err; for they pervert the text, and subvert the gospel. They pervert the text, for

they deal with it as the Papist deals with Rev. xxii. 8, which says, "When I John had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things." Here, says the Papist, is proof that angels are to be worshipped. And this he says, though the very next verse has these words, "See thou do it not; worship God." In like manner, to take the answer, "Keep the commandments," as the final answer to the young man's first inquiry, is to assert a doctrine which the twenty-first verse of the text is intended to set aside and condemn. But such a mode of interpretation not only perverts the text, it subverts the gospel; for we are expressly told, that "if righteousness come by the law, than Christ has died in vain." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us," &c.

But let us see what this final answer of our Lord contains. It contains, we conceive, both a special and a general answer—a special answer appropriate to the character and circumstances of the young man, and a general answer applicable to all men, who, like the young man, inquire, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life." The special answer appropriate to the young man is in these words, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." The general answer applicable to him and to all men is, "Come and follow me;" or, as Mark has it, "Come, take up the cross and follow me."

Taking up the cross and following Christ; that is, faith in Christ—(for there is no one at all acquainted with the meaning of scripture language but will admit that following Christ, and believing in Christ, are expressions of the same import; or, if there be any difference between the two expressions, following Christ is faith in Christ, prescribed in a more emphatic and practical form, especially when it is conjoined with taking up the cross)—following Christ then, that is, faith in Christ, is required of all men indiscriminately in order to salvation. But while enforcing that requirement, it is much for edification to call the attention of those whom we address to their besetting sins, as hindrances to faith, and, when unforsaken, as incompatible with salvation. This is what our Lord does in the case before us. The besetting sin of the young man was love of this present world, and a too high idea of his meritoriousness in the sight of God. It argued more than a common amount of moral and religious principle and practice, that one so young, so wealthy, and so powerful, could, with any truth at all, declare, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." But along with all this, the Saviour saw that there was in the youth such a love of self and of the world, and such an oversight of his undoubted short-

comings, even with respect to those commands, of the keeping of which he was so positive, if not sinfully boastful, that when he said, "What lack I yet?" Jesus in effect replied, "One thing thou lackest. Thou lackest love of thy neighbour *as thyself*. This command, though you have asserted the contrary, you have not kept. That you may be able to say with more truth that you have kept it, Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor. Give to them that are so needy what thou so much doatest on thyself. Love thy poor neighbour, not thy wealth. Love thy poor neighbour *as thyself*." And that his injunction might appear the more reasonable and profitable, he reminds him of a truth which he could not deny, namely, that treasure spent upon the poor on earth is treasure laid up in heaven. But this was to wound the young man in a tender part. It was to deprive the strong man in the youth's heart both of his goods and of the arms by which he defended them. It was to humble his self-righteousness, to kill his selfishness, to deprive him of his chief joy, to make him a beggar in the sight of God, as well as a beggar among his fellow-men. It revealed to him the impossibility of serving both God and mammon, since such a sacrifice was required by God. It showed him that the value which he set on eternal life was, after all, not equal to the value which he set upon his present possessions; and that his earnestness in seeking eternal life was not equal to the eagerness with which he clung to the things which perish in the using. That some such effect as this was produced on the young man by this part of our Lord's reply, may be justly inferred from the circumstance, that when he heard it, "he went away sorrowful;" or, as it is in the other evangelists, "grieved and very sorrowful." Had he felt disposed to question the truth of what had been said, he might have gone away, as other Pharisees had often done, dissatisfied or indignant. Had he been unoffended, and only unconvinced and unimpressed, he might have remained to ask some other question, such as that just immediately after by his disciples, "Who, then, can be saved?" But, no: he had been habituated from his boyhood to do the will of God, as expressed in the Ten Commandments; and, as our Lord declares that "he that will do the will of God shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," the young man had an internal witness testifying to the truth of Jesus' words—a witness accustomed to weigh the things of God, and to approve of the things that are more excellent; and the effect, therefore, was great internal discomfort at the thought that what was required was so difficult and painful in itself, and that he felt so reluctant to perform it. And this is just the struggle which every sinner feels when convinced of sin, and called upon to fol-

low Jesus. It was to such an internal struggle that the Saviour evidently desired to bring the young man in connection with the closing universal command—"Come, take up the cross and follow me." For this last is the command, obedience or disobedience to which is the turning point of our salvation. It is a command which may pre-suppose what is difficult and painful in the case of the young man, and of every man; but could we suppose the difficult and painful duty discharged, and this, of following Christ, left undischarged, salvation would be unattained. Had the young man gone and sold all that he had, and given it to the poor, and yet not followed Jesus, he would have been nothing the better of his sacrifice—he would still have come short of eternal life. The true and final, and universal answer to the youth's first enquiry, therefore, is not, "Keep the commandments," but is "Take up the cross, and follow me." This latter is the great requirement in order to salvation. Other requirements may be made, and are made; but they are all made for more effectual and complete conformity to this; for without conformity to this all other requirements are vain. In order to salvation, we may require the ignorant to get knowledge, and, with all his getting, to get understanding in divine things. We may require the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, the worldling to renounce the world, and the self-righteous to abjure his self-righteousness; but all these must be followed up with and terminate in the command, "Follow me"—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." If we enjoin the confession of the penitent, "Unclean, unclean," we must add the invitation, "Look unto me;" if we say, "Flee from the wrath to come," we must also say, "Come unto me;" if we say, "Repent," we must also say, "Believe the gospel," for "without faith it is impossible to please God."

How false, therefore, and unscriptural is that style of preaching—usually called *moderate*—which makes sinners believe that, by reaching a certain but unknown and unexplained point in moral rectitude and religious observance, they can make up for themselves a title to eternal life. The evils arising from such a style of preaching, and, I may add, of hearing too, for there is a *moderate* style of *hearing* as well as *preaching*—it is hardly possible to over-estimate. It deceives the sinner, keeps back from him the alarming fact, that he is already in a state of condemnation, and that nothing that he can do can remove that condemnation. It keeps back from him the blessed truth, that Jesus died the just for the unjust, and that there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. It keeps back from him the essential doctrines and duties of the cross—man's guilt and helplessness; Christ's atone-

ment, all-sufficiency, and freeness for salvation ; the true nature of repentance and faith in Jesus ; the true nature of those principles and motives by which he ought to be governed, in denying himself to ungodliness and worldly lusts. It implies, though it may not affirm, the denial of the atonement of Christ, in the Scripture sense of that doctrine, and deprives its co-relative doctrines of all their vitality. It dishonours the holy law of God by making it be believed, that its commands are not so high and holy, nor its penalty so certain and severe, as the atoning death of Christ so emphatically teaches us to believe. It proceeds upon a misapprehension of all that is said in Scripture of the end of the death of Christ, and upon a perversion of the moral law itself, forgetting that all its commands are now intended, *first*, to convince of sin and bring to Christ ; and, *secondly*, to serve as a rule of duty. In interpreting our text, it preaches the law apart from the Gospel, and thereby subverts both ; for it stops short at the answer, " Keep the commandments," and overlooks or misinterprets the command, " Follow me." Let us, then, beware of incurring the guilt and danger of such a style of preaching and such a style of hearing. We say of *hearing*, for there is a heart-moderation as well as a pulpit-moderation, which converts the soundest and most wholesome doctrine into spiritual poison, by cherishing the unbelieving reflection, " This is a hard saying, who can hear it ?"

But to return for a moment longer to the text. How would obedience to the concluding requirement lead the young man to the perfection of the Christian character, which is necessary to salvation ? " If thou wilt be *perfect*, go and sell," &c. The perfection here spoken of cannot mean entire freedom from actual sin in this life ; as if the selling of his property and following Christ would secure the young man from future transgression and short-coming in duty—make him, in short, a thoroughly sanctified saint. Even Paul renounces all claim to perfection in this sense. " Not," says he, " as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." But we read of other kinds of perfection—perfection as to the conscience ; " Gifts and sacrifices could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience," (Heb. ix. 9 ; x. 1.)—perfection as to faith ; " That we might perfect that which is lacking in your faith," (1 Thess. iii. 10.)—perfection as to fitness for the Christian work and warfare ; " That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," (2 Tim. iii. 17) ; " That ye may stand perfect, even complete in all the will of God," (Col. iv. 12.) It must be apparent, how, by following Christ, the young man would be made perfect in all these senses of the term. As to the

perfection pertaining to the conscience, what the law could not do for him, Jesus himself would do for him. By the one offering of himself he would for ever perfect him as one of those for whom he was about to make expiation. As to perfection in faith, the very selling of his large possessions and casting of himself on Christ—the self-denial and self-renunciation and willingness to suffer persecution for the sake of Christ implied in taking up the cross—these would have indicated, if not a perfect faith, at least such a faith, that, if any thing were lacking in its firmness and sincerity of purpose, would have so interested him in the Redeemer, that, by Divine grace, he would be led from faith to faith, till he could say, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As to the perfection which consists in being complete in all the will of God, and in being thoroughly furnished unto all good works, the young man being, by his faith, renewed in the spirit of his mind, and filled with principles and sentiments to which he was formerly a stranger—principles and sentiments which go to the completion of the man after God’s own heart, in all the essential parts and proportions of that character—would now be prepared for a faithful discharge of all the duties to which he might be called. Besides, in following Christ, he would be following a prophet as well as a priest—a prophet in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; so that, receiving all necessary supplies of light and spiritual aid, he would grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, till, having reached the highest species of perfection—the perfection of sanctification—he could say with the Apostle, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give unto me at that day.”

Brethren, the turning point of this blessed career is *faith*. Have you believed to the saving of the soul? Have you such a faith as may be called a following of Christ?—such a faith as has made you willing to sacrifice every thing for his sake? Have you such a faith as has yet made you sacrifice *any* thing for his sake? Like the young man, you may have done much—much short of a sacrifice—for the salvation of the soul. You may have done so much as to dispose you, like him, to say, “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” But that was not enough for him; neither will it be enough for you. Rest assured

that there is something in which, in Christ's sight, you are lacking, if such be your ground of confidence. The young man himself felt, or at least suspected, that, after all that he had done, there was something lacking, and he came to Jesus to learn what it might be. He had not a soul-satisfying peace, and he wished to know why. He had laboured long and assiduously for such a peace, with an earnestness and assiduity to which you can make no pretensions, but had laboured in vain. And have you found by your little doings what he could not find by his many and laborious ones? Religion has with you, perhaps, been nothing better than a form, utterly void of faith; and your keeping of the law nothing but conformity to the customs of society, and a prudential regard to your worldly interests. God has not been in your religion. The Bible has not dictated and directed your morality. Neither your religion nor morality has been influenced by serious thoughts about eternity, and a faith in its reality. Are you, then, better than the young man? No, in nowise; you are worse than he. The young man was deeply convinced of the doctrine of a life to come. Can this be said of all of you? Convinced of a life to come, he was in earnest about the salvation of his soul. Can this be said of all of you? In earnest about the salvation of his soul, he had been religious from his very boyhood. Can this be said of all of you? From his boyhood he had been strictly, severely moral, in his deportment. Can this be said of all of you? His strict, severe morality, he had maintained amid many temptations to a profligate life. Can such self-denial be affirmed of all of you? The young man came to Jesus with a reverential regard to him as a teacher of righteousness. Can this be said of all of you? Have you ever come to Jesus with a heart and a kneeling reverence like his? The young man came to Jesus with the express purpose of learning the way to eternal life, and with a specific question bearing on this all-important subject. Can this be said of all of you? Have you ever truly come to Jesus at all, or put to him any serious question? In all your coming to the word, the closet, or the sanctuary, have you ever come to Jesus there, and with the earnest purpose of asking, "What must I do to be saved?" The young man felt the force of what Jesus said, and went away without questioning or cavilling—went away with a sting in his conscience, and that, too, with respect to what many a worldly formalist would call a most unreasonable requirement—"Sell that thou hast and give to the poor." Can this be said of all of you? Have you never cavilled? Have the words of Jesus ever come to you with stinging power? The young man felt a struggle within, between duty and interest, and went away humbled and with a heavy heart—"grieved

and very sorrowful"—that what was required was so painful, and he so unwilling to discharge it. Can this be said of all of you? Have you ever been even so far quickened as to feel that duty and worldly interest were at variance? Has it ever humbled and saddened you to think that you are so prone to what is evil, and so averse from what is good, and that the world has so much the dominion over you?

There are all these differences between the young man, and, at least, some of you; and they are all differences in his favour. What say you, then, of your prospects for eternity? He was unsaved. What, then, shall become of you? "If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?"

But there is another and striking difference between the young man and some of you, and still a difference in his favour. Some of you are far advanced in life, and about to drop into the grave. But it is a youth of whom we have been speaking—a youth who had been in earnest, though in a self-righteous way, about religion and the soul's salvation, from his very boyhood. But have none of you, whose life is hastening to an end, been godless all your life long, going astray from the very womb, and "treasuring up unto yourselves," until now, "wrath against the day of wrath." A whole lifetime spent in sin! How appalling!

But there is a remedy. And what the remedy? A life of mortification? A making up for past deficiencies? A working out for yourselves a righteousness like the young man's? No, that now can never be. You can never say, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." And though you could, the young man, with all his personal righteousness, was still a sinner—was found wanting, and needing pardon and a Saviour. And so would you, did your personal righteousness equal his. But must I not return to attainments in righteousness like those of the young man, before I can expect pardon and an interest in the Saviour? Though you did reach attainments in righteousness, equal to those of the young man, they would require to be renounced in coming to Jesus. For, what is the object and aim of the conversation in the text? To convince the youth that he was a sinner, and prevail upon him *as a sinner*, not *as righteous*, to take up the cross and follow Jesus. Be convinced of sin; as sinners, not as righteous, take up the cross and follow Jesus, and we are authorized to proclaim to you an instant, a free, and a full forgiveness, on the ground of another righteousness than your own—the righteousness of Jesus. "For he who knew no sin was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of

God in him." "All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Now, to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the *ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered ; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

SERMON LXXXIX.

THE REDEEMER'S DESERTION.

BY THE REV. J. R. MACKENZIE, DUMFRIES.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."—MATTHEW xxvii. 46.

(A Sacramental Sermon.)

THE narrative, in Old Testament history, of Abraham binding his son Isaac upon the altar, is invested with an extraordinary interest. The relationship between the offerer and the victim, the character of the former, and the hopes which were centered in the latter, and, above all, the consideration that Abraham acted in obedience to divine authority, combine to awaken in the mind a painful solicitude. We are concerned for the feelings of the parent, for the fate of the son, and for the honour of the divine character. But when the hand of Abraham is arrested by the voice from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him," our anxiety gives place to admiration—admiration of the patriarch's faith, the power of which entitled him truly to the designation of "*The Father of the Faithful*,"—admiration of his son, whose faith wrought a patience and an unreserved obedience, which were stronger than the principle of self-preservation itself,—and admiration of the Divine Providence, whose ways, however mysterious to us, are all wise, and holy, and just, and good.

But, brethren, we have a portion of New Testament history this day, brought before us, more interesting, a thousand-fold, than that to which we have alluded. Behold a *greater* than Abraham, and a *greater* than Isaac are here. It is God the Father, whose love to his Son is infinite, who is addressed by "the beloved Son," "the heir of all things." It is God the Son who is wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; and who, in the body prepared for him, comes to do the will of his Father, by giving his life a ransom for many. Nature is clothed with mourning on the solemn occasion, and thick darkness covers the heavens at noon-day. A general gloom prevails without; but the illustrious sufferer speaks of a deeper gloom within. A sense of the divine favour is withdrawn from his soul. The iniquities of his people

have, as a dark cloud, separated between the surety and his God, and hence these memorable words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Oh! may the divine Spirit, whose office it is to take of the things that are Christ's and to show them to our souls, descend upon us in the infinite sufficiency of his enlightening and sanctifying power! May we, by faith, behold the glory which was overshadowed by this mysterious gloom! And of it may we have cause to say, on this feast day, truly "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

In the following discourse, we shall, humbly depending on Divine aid, consider,

I. The import of our Redeemer's language.

II. Some of the great designs to be effected through his desertion.

I. In considering the import of our Redeemer's language, we observe,

1. That the text does not denote that the Godhead of Christ was separated from his manhood, so that his humanity alone was present upon the cross. He suffered, it is true, in his *human* nature; and to the end that he might, like every high priest ordained under the law have somewhat also to offer, he took to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, the offering of which *once* hath obtained remission of sins. Deity not only was *united* to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, but *dwelt* in the flesh, manifesting its glory on the cross, as well as in the temple and the streets of Jerusalem. The desertion was not, therefore, on the part of Deity in the second person, but on the part of Deity in the first, who, acting as judge, left his Son without any sense of his comforting presence, while the ransom was in course of being paid. As it is stated in our excellent Catechism, "the eternal Son of God became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever."

2. The language of our text, is not that of *murmuring*. His submission to his Father's will was complete, and in performing it lay his chief delight. From eternity he knew that the enduring of wrath was necessary in order to man's restoration to Divine favour; he knew that the blood of bulls and of goats, however frequently shed, could not take away sin; he knew that he was the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, as the only propitiation; and, therefore, instead of asking like Isaac, "Where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" he said, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God;" instead of being surprised by his arrest, he foretold all the circumstances attending his death with the minuteness of narration; instead of courting the protection of

his followers and friends, he rebuked one, when a blind affection led him to dissuade his lord from the cross; and instead of murmuring on account of his sufferings, he said, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it. I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." Was he dragged or driven as a reluctant victim to the altar? He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. But his own love it was that led him to it, as well as supported him under all he had to endure. "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." (John x. 18.)

3. The language of the text is not indicative of *distrust*. Natural feeling may express itself without the trust of the soul in God being abandoned. In our Redeemer resided natural feeling in the highest degree of perfection, and divine grace in perfection. When God the Father hid his countenance, there was an ebb of comfort from the soul of the Redeemer, creating there a greater void than there could be in nature, if every river, sea, and ocean were dried up at once. But hear faith triumphing over feeling, and taking, as it ever should, precedence of it, "My God, my God;" after which, we have the language of feeling in the words, "Why hast thou forsaken me."

4. The language of the text is not that of despair. The cup of which he had to drink was full of the wine of the wrath of God, and was exceeding bitter. But did its bitterness cause him to dash it from his lips and abandon that redeeming work on which the Godhead looked with interest, and angels with awe? All the sorrows and sins of the redeemed were gathered together upon him at once; and, though under the guilt of innumerable millions he sunk into deep distress, yet not into despair. The consolations which his followers enjoyed, and by which they were enabled to take joyfully the loss of all things, were denied to him. "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none." (Psalm lxxix. 20.) Notwithstanding of his desertion, however, by friends and kinsmen, he cried, "My God, my God." Never was confidence in God exhibited in circumstances so trying. He is confident that the reward promised to him as the righteous servant shall be granted; but he has no unclouded comfort during this hour in looking forward to the enjoyment of it. He is confident that his people shall be redeemed, and that God's election of them to eternal life, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, shall stand; but where is his comforting prospect of their deliverance? All *sensible* comfort is eclipsed. "Thou hast forgotten me." But through the blackness of darkness does my confidence penetrate, and I will not say that thou hast forgotten me, or that thou art

indifferent to *them*. This shame shall be their honour—this sorrow shall be their joy—this darkness shall be their light—this death shall be their life—and this cross of ignominy shall be their crown of glory. My Father shall be their Father, and my God their God.

II. Having thus considered the import of the language in the text, let us now, in the *second* place, direct our attention to some of the great designs to be effected through the desertion to which it refers.

1. The punishment due to the sins of his people was herein endured. The everlasting departure of the wicked from the presence of the Lord is comprehensive of all their misery; and hence, after the work of judgment, the sentence which shall be pronounced by the Judge in reference to the wicked is, "DEPART, ye cursed," &c. As the surety of the redeemed, therefore, Christ had in his soul to endure this separation from the comforting sense of God's presence, when he was made a curse for us; or, in other words, when he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. The suspension of that comforting light he deserved not, *on his own account*—no, not for one moment. In Him was no sin. Thrice was he declared by a voice from heaven to be The Beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. The Roman judge who passed sentence of death on him bore testimony to his innocence, saying, "I find no fault in him." He had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in his mouth, yet it pleased the Lord, in effecting the salvation, of sinners to bruise him and to put him to grief. And though one of his apostles could say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day" (2d Timothy, iv. 7-8)—though, in the prospect of sufferings and death, the same apostle could say, "None of these things move me," "I have a desire to depart"—yet, when the Lord and Master was suffering, He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His *personal* character might warrant the expectation of ease in suffering, but his *federal* character rendered him liable to the wrath due to sin.

2. Another design, accomplished by the desertion of which Christ speaks in the text, was the manifestation of God's regard for the honour of his law.

On earth it had been violated, and *there* must its honour be vindicated. But how shall this be accomplished? To enforce the sanctions of the law by the punishment of its transgressors will never repair the dishonour done to it. By the sufferings of Jesus, however, the law is magnified and made honourable. Never was its majesty more exalted its authority more revered, its purity more admired, and its justice more

established, than by the voluntary sufferings of the Son of God, who, in his unconquerable love, fulfilled its precept and endured its penalty in behalf of those whom he had undertaken to redeem.

3. Another design, contemplated in the Saviour's desertion, was that "He might be like unto his people in all things."

God's people have in this world many tribulations; but none are so overwhelming as those produced by the hiding of their Father's countenance. "In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour, thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." But he adds, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Psalms xxx. 7.) Again—Psalms lxxxix. 46—we find the anguish of the soul, in a state of desertion, thus expressing itself—"How long, Lord? Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire?" In order, therefore, that their high priest might sympathize with them in this, as well as in every other trial, he was forsaken; for "it behoved him in *all* things to be made like unto his brethren; and, in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Hebrews ii. 17-18.)

4. Another design served by our Saviour's desertion was the exhibition to his people of the brightest pattern of confidence in God for their instruction and imitation.

He had no doubt regarding his relation to his Heavenly Father, even in the darkest moments. He did exclaim, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" But his was not the language of unbelief, "My God hath forgotten me;" but the language of unshaken faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; and though I walk in darkness and have no light, yet will I stay myself on my God."

Finally, another design served by our Saviour's desertion, was to enable him to enter upon his mediatorial glory.

He could not enjoy the reward of his work till it had been fully accomplished. His betrayal by Judas intimated that the reward was not distant. Accordingly, when the traitor went forth, Jesus said, "Now is the son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." The depth of his darkness was, he knew, not far from the dawn of his mediatorial exaltation.

1. In conclusion, may not sinners learn from this subject *their* danger and their duty? If God spared not his own son, when sin was *imputed* to him, how shall he deal with you to whom it is *imputed*, and in whom it *lodges*, and over whom it *reigns*. If such things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Do you expect that your broken vows, your forced prayers, your sick-bed repentances, your nominal religion, and your denominational distinctions, shall cause holi-

ness to be propitious, and, at the expense of its divine excellence, prevent your separation from the blessed fountain of felicity? Do you anticipate the wailing of the lost? Ere, then, you be on the other side of the impassable gulf, seek the Lord while he is to be found, and call upon him while he is near. In that Son, who for our sakes was forsaken for a time, God is, for a time, waiting to be gracious to the very chief of sinners. In that Son, God is ready to enter into a covenant with them, that he will never fail nor forsake them till he has done all the good to which his loving-kindness and faithfulness are firmly and tenderly pledged. But, oh! remember, that the present is that accepted time, and that the present is the day of salvation. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." To-day is it declared, that God "has devised means that his banished be not expelled from him." "No man cometh to the Father but by the Son, and whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out." Oh, then, forsake not now, for lying vanities, your true mercies, lest by the God of mercy you be for ever forsaken.

2. This subject teaches the people of God suitably to appreciate their privileges. You are about to ascend the mount of ordinances, and as you commemorate the love of Christ, and drink of the wine of consolation, remember ye that it is very costly. His blessed soul was filled with divine wrath, that your guilty souls might be filled with joy and peace in believing. On him justice frowned, that towards you mercy through righteousness might be extended. His soul was enveloped in gloom, that yours might be encircled with glory. His desertion was penal, that your desertions might be medicinal, and tend to the perfecting of your faith, your repentance, your love, your humility, and your devotedness to God. And, now, in that perfect darkness which covered the man Christ Jesus, some benighted and disconsolate soul may find the dawn of everlasting day, and a refreshing foretaste of that communion which is without interruption and without imperfection. If so, to God in Christ we shall ascribe all the glory for ever and ever.—Amen.

SERMON XC.

GOING FORTH TO CHRIST WITHOUT THE CAMP.

BY THE REV. JOHN THOMSON, DYSART.

"Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp bearing his reproach."—*HAN. xiii. 13.*

(A farewell sermon, being the discourse preached immediately after the Disruption, in the Parish Church of Dysart, May 28. 1843.)

I HAVE selected these words, my friends, as an appropriate subject for a parting exhortation. The circumstances in which we are placed this day invest them with no ordinary degree of interest. This, in all probability, is the last time I shall ever address you within these walls. The important event which has recently taken place in connection with our beloved Church, renders it becoming that all who approve of that great movement do forthwith withdraw themselves from the now enslaved Establishment. The path of duty is, to my own mind, clear as the light of day. I have accordingly taken the decisive step of separation along with my esteemed brethren ; and a sincere regard for your spiritual welfare leads me to desire that you also should be alive to your obligation, faithfully to adhere to the vital principles involved in this momentous controversy, and that, as an evidence of your sincerity, you should openly and boldly rally around the standard of Scriptural truth and freedom, which is once more lifted up in our land in honour of the crown rights of the King of Zion. Bear in mind, that it is with Him we have to do in this matter ; and, believing that his pure and piercing eye is at this moment looking into the soul of every one in this assembly, I entreat you to listen with profound reverence to the voice now so impressively and solemnly sounded forth in our ears both by his word and providence. This is my text, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

These words were originally addressed to the believing Hebrews for the purpose of impressing upon them the necessity of proving steadfast in their adherence to Christ and his cause, at a time when they were subjected to severe trials and persecution on account of their religion. I cannot conceive any thing more admirably calculated to promote that end. The example of our Lord himself ought surely to be regarded as

of supreme authority by all his professed followers. We here see how he acted when his principles were put to the test, by the iniquitous conduct of his adversaries. We behold his unbending fidelity under the pressure of the most appalling sufferings. We have a view of the resolute and unshaken firmness which he displayed when earth and hell conspired to turn him aside from the path of righteousness. And, if we have the spirit of true discipleship in our hearts—if we possess the high-toned integrity which he demands—how can we, when called upon in his adorable providence to vindicate his injured truth, but follow his divine example? The allusion contained in our text admits of an easy explanation. Under the Levitical law, the sacrifices presented on the altar of atonement were typical of Christ as “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” They all pointed the eye of faith to his vicarious sufferings and death as the procuring cause of our redemption. And, with regard to such of them as were sin-offerings, the law required that their blood should be carried into the holy place, but that their bodies should be burned without the camp. That was highly significant. We see its true meaning in the history of our Redeemer. He is “the propitiation for our sins.” “On him was laid the iniquity of us all.” The affecting type received in him its literal fulfilment, “Wherefore Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gates. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp bearing his reproach.”

That we may enter into the spirit and design of this apostolical injunction, I crave your attention to the following particulars.

1. Let us go forth unto Christ without the camp, that we may testify to him as the Messiah, the only Saviour. This is manifestly the first leading idea which our text is designed to convey. On this fundamental doctrine of our holy faith hinges the wide and essential difference between Christianity and Judaism. It constitutes also one vital point of difference between the Gospel and the various systems of heathenism and infidelity. All the sections of the unbelieving world agree in this, that they do not acknowledge Christ as the promised Messiah. The unconverted Jews especially reject the only-begotten Son of God. And, as this sublime and precious epistle was composed, under the guidance of Divine inspiration, for the special purpose of establishing this fundamental truth, and of exhibiting its practical bearings, it is clear that the apostle, in urging upon those believers to whom he wrote, the duty of explicitly and openly professing their faith in Christ before the world, designed to teach that it became them as his followers to declare, that “this is He who should come, and that we need not look for another.” They were bound to testify, that, in the person of Christ, all the predictions

concerning the Messiah receive their accomplishment. They were bound to testify, that the circumstances of his advent into the world, his incarnation, the time of his birth, his spotless character, his life of exalted piety and benevolence, the doctrines and precepts which he taught, the stupendous miracles which he performed, his expiatory sufferings and death, his resurrection, and his exaltation to the right hand of the Father—all proved, beyond doubt and controversy, that Jesus is Emmanuel, and consequently, “that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.” And they were bound moreover to testify, that Christ was the object of their own faith, and hope, and confidence—that they regarded him as the Lord our righteousness—that they found “redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,” and that he was their peace, the very life of their souls, yea, “all their salvation and all their desire.” All this essentially entered into their testimony. While the unbelieving world was blind to his divine excellencies, they could say, “But we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” They are, therefore, exhorted to go forth unto him without the camp, that they might testify by deeds as well as by words their faith in him as the Holy One of God, “the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble.”

“Unto you who believe he is precious.” Attachment to the person of Christ can only spring from a divine principle. “No man can truly call him Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” I beg of you, therefore, my brethren, distinctly to understand, that I do not expect you will be prepared to lift up a consistent testimony to his Messiahship, unless you are the subjects of a saving change. “The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.” Those who have only a name to live, whatever be their political creed, cannot enter into the views and feelings which characterize the true followers of Christ; and, therefore, will not go forth unto him without the camp bearing his reproach. But I do trust that such of you as are divinely enlightened to perceive him as the “brightness of the Father’s glory, and express image of his person,” will not be insensible to the obligation under which you lie to bear testimony to his Messiahship. O be assured, that if he is “made of God unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”—“if you are begotten again unto a lively hope through his resurrection from the dead”—if he is really in you the hope of glory, “you will not hesitate to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

2. Let us go forth unto Jesus without the camp, that we may *specially* bear testimony to him as King of Zion. This, my friends, is what may be emphatically called *our present duty*. We might justly regard it as

treason against the Lord of glory, were we to overlook this view of our subject. We dare not hold our peace regarding the sovereign authority of the Redeemer, although some prejudiced and faithless souls should be offended. We read, that when Christ accomplished the work of our redemption, his Father, in testimony of his unbounded approbation and love, "set him at his own righthand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i 20-23.) Other passages are equally demonstrative of the exalted place which our Lord occupies in the economy of our salvation. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, *hear ye him.*" "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. ii. 9-11.) "When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he said, and let all the angels of God worship him." "But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." (Heb. i. 6-8.) Such is the honourable testimony which Jehovah bears to the royal dignity of Christ. All heaven is jubilant with his praise. And shall it be said, that those on earth whom he hath redeemed with his own blood are so blind to his princely glory, or so hostile to his reign, as to refuse to render to him the rightful homage due to his name in his Church below? Methinks, with what holy indignation would the soul of the venerable Apostle resent such an affront to his Divine Master. Our text is a lasting monument of Paul's fidelity to Jesus as the Head of his Church. "Let us, therefore, go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

It has been said by Principal Robertson, the very type of Moderatism, and the leader of his party, that "if perfect virtue were to appear on earth, the whole world would fall down and worship it." We doubt not that the pompous orator deemed that a brilliant sentiment. But his excellent colleague, Dr Erskine, a man of a very different spirit, and a faithful representative of the evangelical ministers of our Church, firmly replied, "that perfect virtue has descended from heaven in the person of the Son of God, but that men, so far from falling down to worship him, impiously imbrued their hands in his sacred blood." Look at my text, and say which of these statements bears the stamp of truth. It is

a fact that ought never to be forgotten, that it was for asserting his kingly office our Lord was put to the cruel and ignominious death of the cross. Read that part of his history. What was the subject-matter of his accusation. Was it not that he was the King of the Jews? Well did his enemies know that no other argument could have any weight at the tribunal of Pilate. They, therefore, urged that plea with all their cunning and malignity. "If then let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." That consideration had the designed effect; and, not to speak of the mockery with which our blessed Lord was assailed when in the hands of sinners—his having been arrayed in royal robes, a crown of thorns having been put upon his head, and a mock sceptre having been put into his hand—I would have you to think on the superscription placed over him on the cross, and which was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, for the purpose of fixing upon him the gaze of the whole world. Here is the title of his accusation—"This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." That was a claim which his enemies could not endure. Hence they so vehemently cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." Hence, as if the more impressively to intimate their utter rejection of him in this capacity, they thrust him out of the city, and on Golgotha, "the place of skulls," put him to death as a malefactor.

I dwell not, my friends, on this melancholy exhibition of human depravity; suffice it to say, that the hatred of the wicked and ungodly in every age has been virulently displayed against the regal authority of the Mediator. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us." And what is the history of spiritual tyranny and usurpation, the history of persecution and erastianism, but a practical commentary on that prediction, written in characters of blood? The followers of the meek and lowly Jesus soon found that nought awaited them but reproach and suffering for maintaining this article of our creed. And was it not for contending for the crown rights of the Redeemer that our godly forefathers were driven from their churches, and families, and homes; and that, rather than surrender one iota of what is due to Christ as the head of his Church, they sealed their testimony with their blood? They clearly saw that religion is but the mockery of a name, if it bear not the stamp of his authority. They knew there could be no spiritual liberty enjoyed by his professing people, if his supremacy over them was not duly recognised and honoured; and, believing that the doctrine of Christ's headship is the key-stone in the arch of our spiritual privileges, they nobly contended for the faith once delivered unto the saints, and thus sought

to transmit to us unimpaired the "liberty wherewith he hath made his people free." Let us, therefore, follow their example, by going forth unto Jesus without the camp bearing his reproach.

3. We must go forth unto our Lord without the camp if we would enjoy fellowship and communion with him. This idea is naturally suggested by the preceding context, "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." The importance of this consideration should ever be borne in mind. It argues a very diseased state of things on the part of any professing Christian, when the question with him is,—How far he may go in the path of error and corruption, and still enjoy communion with the "author and finisher of our faith." And it certainly is a sign of daring impiety, when individuals, be they ministers or hearers, are exercising their ingenuity in devising reasons for palliating soul-destroying errors, and when they have the effrontery to tax us with want of charity when we endeavour to vindicate the doctrine of spiritual fellowship, and call upon the Christian people to abandon the communion of a Church that has practically renounced the King of Saints.

I am aware that this is a point of great delicacy, but, considering its immense importance to the present and eternal welfare of our souls, we must not shrink from the investigation. I entreat you, then, carefully to weigh the following facts which you will find recorded in the Word of God:—

The inspired writer intimates in the context that the believing followers of Christ have spiritual rights and privileges to which the unbelieving Jews are utter strangers. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." There could be no fellowship with Christ while he was rejected and disowned as the Son of God. And, I presume, that no one who knows anything of vital godliness will be so foolhardy as to maintain that it was possible for an unbelieving Jew to have fellowship with the "Prince of Life." That is one fact. Take now the case of heathen idolaters. How can they have any communion with the true and living God? Are they not described as "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them?" But we meet with a still stronger declaration—"Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils." "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness; and what concord hath Christ with Belial; or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

But there is a third case, namely, that of the great apostacy. Does

the Lord intimate in any part of the sacred volume, that a soul may safely and dutifully remain in that communion? So far from saying one word that might lead to that conclusion, what can be plainer or more decisive of the duty of believers on the point at issue, than the following command of Jehovah, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Now, my friends, at a time when desperate efforts are made by interested parties, to confound truth and error, it is a duty incumbent on every one to enquire, where is the Scripture warrant for believing that fellowship and communion with Christ may be enjoyed by those who knowingly, and deliberately, and willfully, reject him as their Head and King? For my own part, I could not expect his blessing, if I was conscious that, for worldly considerations, I consented, in matters spiritual, to a virtual rejection of Christ, as the Lord of my conscience. Be not deceived, therefore, with vain words. God is jealous of his own honour. "He will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images." (Exodus xxxiii.) Do we not read, that when an act of idolatry was committed in the camp of Israel, the Lord forthwith withdrew the token of his gracious presence from that polluted scene? Is it not evident that, although Jesus remained on earth for the space of forty days after his resurrection, not for once did he enter into that temple, the worshippers of which uttered the horrid imprecation, "his blood be upon us and upon our children?" And, as it is the office of the Holy Ghost to glorify Christ, and to apply the benefits of his redemption, how can those who say by their conduct, that they will not have the King of Zion to reign over them, hope to enjoy communion with him in the ordinances of his grace? On these grounds, therefore, we have a powerful motive for going forth unto Jesus without the camp.

4. In obeying this command, we must lay our account with contempt, reproach, and persecution. This, my friends, has invariably been the lot of those who have been enabled, through grace, to lift up a faithful testimony to Immanuel. It is the dictate of experience, as well as of Scripture, that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The mere circumstance of coming out from the world lying in wickedness, and of faithfully serving the captain of our salvation, has never failed to bring upon them the scorn and hatred of the ungodly. The prophetic warnings of our Lord to his disciples have been amply verified—"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Our text distinctly points to this consequence of going forth unto Christ without the camp. That course of life is closely asso-

ciated with bearing his reproach. The votaries of superstition cannot bear to see the truth as it is in Jesus openly proclaimed and honoured. Men of despotic principles will not tolerate, if they can help it, a spiritual authority which stands in the way of their usurpations. And false professors of the Gospel, whose interests are linked with corruption and tyranny, will be among the foremost to vilify such as for conscience sake withdraw from their communion. We may, therefore, lay it to our account, that the step we have taken will provoke the sneers of the ungodly, and every species of ill-treatment which they may have it in their power to inflict. Where do we find, among men, a brighter example of piety, and holiness, and philanthropy, than that of the venerable Apostle of the Gentiles? and who ever experienced greater reproach or more bitter persecution than he? When we look higher, we see that our Lord himself "was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Why should we dream of exemption from trials? The offence of the cross has not ceased. But we must not be deterred from following Christ by the dread of obloquy, or the loss of all things. The sentence which rung incessantly in the ears of Luther and other reformers may well influence our conduct. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Such, my friends, are the doctrines of our text, and such their practical bearings. And now I must hasten to a close. I deeply feel the solemnity of this moment. My absence in future from this place of worship will remind you of the cause of our separation from the Establishment. We leave it on grounds purely scriptural. We leave it because we feel we could no longer be free in it to do the will of Christ. Every constitutional means has been used to prevent the guilt and the calamity which the perverseness of our rulers, urged on by the impotency of those who have bowed their necks to the yoke of Erastianism, has brought upon the nation. When these means proved ineffectual, it became the friends of spiritual independence and non-intrusion to take the only step which could secure the purity and integrity of the constitution of our Church. This has been done with much prayer and deliberation. Our principles are before the world. We have tabled our protest and challenged our opponents to answer it; and till that be satisfactorily done, it is manifest that the party who refuse to follow our example are the schismatics. We claim to be the Church of Scotland, the Church of our fathers, the Church of the first and second Reformation, the Church of the Confession of Faith, and of the Covenants. We occupy high and honourable ground. And, satisfied as I am with the

soundness of our views, I certainly feel desirous that all of you should intelligently, and devoutly, and cordially embrace them. I would say to such of you as are resolved no longer to attend my ministry, that, while I have no feeling but that of kindness towards you, and while I long exceedingly for your salvation, I am bound, in faithfulness to declare, that you do wrong, egregiously wrong, in consenting to surrender your spiritual liberties, by submitting to those Erastian principles which have now been recognised, or rather been adopted and declared to be the law of the land. Your birth-right privileges have been summarily and arbitrarily taken away ; will you tamely yield to the degradation ? Let no one deceive you by talking of hair-breadth differences. All the sophistry in the world cannot alter the nature either of truth or of error. Be not, therefore, led away from the simplicity of the Gospel, either by confident assertions or boisterous declamations. Remember that you must soon appear at the tribunal of the Almighty Saviour, whose glory is involved in this controversy. Are you prepared to give in your account ? O, I entreat you by every consideration that can influence your minds for eternity, to lay to heart the things that belong to your peace." Have recourse, without delay, to "that blood which cleanseth from all sin." And, whatever be your feelings towards him who now for the last time addresses you, and who has for a long period laboured in private and in public to win your souls to Christ, I beseech you, as you value the approbation of Him who sitteth on the throne of glory, that you trifle not with His kingly prerogatives. And to the beloved flock who own me as their pastor, I have only at present to say, that in lifting up your testimony to the headship of Christ, you do what will not be forgotten by him in your dying hour, or when you shall appear at his bar in the presence of an assembled universe. May he preserve you all unto his kingdom and glory.—Amen.

SERMON XCI.

PRIVATE PRAYER.

BY THE REV. JOHN POLLOCK, BALDERNOCK.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."—MATTHEW vi. 6.

THE representations of the Word of God in reference to the nature, duty, and privilege of private devotion, are eminently fitted to awaken most solemn considerations in the mind of every professing Christian. Specially are these representations calculated to excite a salutary alarm in the hearts of those conscious of a frequent and habitual neglect of closet duties. The very heathen are exhibited in the Scriptures as calling upon their gods, not only in the season of danger and alarm, but on other occasions of a less exciting kind. In point of fact, private prayer is one of the obligations of natural religion, resulting from the inseparable connection subsisting between the creature and the Creator; and revelation at once reiterates the duty, and engrafts it upon the peculiar doctrines involved in the mediation of Christ. Hence it follows, that the person who does not engage in the exercises of private devotion, at once disregards the plainest dictates of natural religion, and, so far as duty is concerned, practically falls short of the degraded and besotted heathen. But this is not all. Prayer is obviously one of the duties which our blessed Lord does not so directly enjoin, as exhibit, encourage, and explain. He does not say emphatically and authoritatively, pray; but he assumes that each and all of his followers are familiar with the duty of bending the knee, and therefore he simply communicates plain and precious instructions respecting the manner in which the duty should be performed, and presents the peculiar privileges resulting from its unfeigned and regular observance. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." A professing Christian, therefore, ignorant of the duty and indifferent to the privilege of private devotion, ought unhesi-

tatingly and immediately to question the reality of his discipleship. He may, indeed, pray in secret, and nevertheless have only a name to live; but he can hardly be otherwise than spiritually dead if he offer not up the desires of his heart unto God in solitude and sincerity. It has been somewhat quaintly but most expressively said, that God has no spiritual children born dumb. It might, with equal truth, be alleged that none of the family of God ever lose their speech in a subsequent period of their history; for the child of God generally first indicates the reality of the new birth by strong crying and tears to his heavenly Father, continues to pray during his whole earthly pilgrimage, and departs for his final home amidst the ejaculations of devotion.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christians native air,
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.

The words of our text naturally require the consideration of the four following topics:—

- I. The nature of prayer—"When thou prayest."
- II. The kind of prayer prescribed in the text—"Enter into thy closet."
- III. The object of prayer—"Pray to thy Father which is in secret."
- IV. The reward promised—"Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

I. We are first, then, to consider the nature of prayer.

From the carnality of the human heart, externals occupy a most unreasonable and unscriptural place in the views generally taken of all religious services. Prayer more particularly is oftentimes resolved into a mere matter of attitude, accent, and phraseology. Now, there may be on the part of a professed suppliant at a throne of grace the assumption and maintenance of a posture so graceful and seemly, as to command the admiration of the painter and the statuary—the utterance of tones so soft and subdued, as to ravish the ears of a votary of music—and the employment of phraseology so becoming and so elevated, as to extort the plaudits of the lovers of eloquence and poetry; and yet all the while the prayer may be an abomination to the Lord. The truth is, that the Scriptures set their seal to almost every conceivable variety of posture in prayer, and present instances of successful wrestling with God in cases where the desires of the heart were not even embodied in words. Stephen *kneeled down*, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The publican, *standing afar off*, would

not so much as *lift up his eyes to heaven*, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Solomon *stood before the altar of the Lord*, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and *spread forth his hands towards heaven*, and said, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above, or on earth beneath." Jehosaphat *bowed his head with his face to the ground*; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem *fell before the Lord*, worshipping the Lord. Elijah *sat down* under a juniper tree, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, "It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." He who left us an example that we should follow his steps, "*lifted up his eyes to heaven*," "*kneeled down and prayed*," and "*fell on his face and prayed*." It is, therefore, obvious that God has not prescribed to his people any fixed posture in drawing nigh to him. Nor has he authoritatively enjoined any unalterable form of sound words to be used in prayer. It may be thought, indeed, that the exquisitely beautiful and comprehensive prayer dictated by our Lord, in answer to the supplication of his disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray," possesses the character of a prescribed form, universally and literally obligatory. But it should be carefully noticed, that Jesus said, "*after this manner pray ye*;" that the prayer, as presented in the parallel passages in Mathew and Luke, exhibits considerable varieties and modifications; that there is not the slightest scriptural evidence that either our Lord or his disciples afterwards used the prayer in its literal form; that no portion of the prayer conveys an allusion to the name of Christ, whilst in that blessed and all-prevailing name every request is required to be offered; and that the combined parts of the prayer do not embody any distinct and particular expression of thanksgiving, whilst all the children of God are specifically enjoined in everything to give thanks. It is, however, more to our present purpose to notice, that prayer is often represented in Scripture apart altogether from any form of sound words. In that hour ever to be remembered when the children of Israel stood on the shores of the Red Sea, ere the waters were parted to form a pathway for the emancipated bondsmen, the Lord said to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;" and yet the prayer of the man of God in this case must have been ejaculatory, as not the slightest hint of its nature or its utterance is given in the holy oracles. When Hannah, in bitterness of soul, prayed unto the Lord and wept sore, *she spake in her heart* only; her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. But this speaking with the heart, in point of fact, constitutes the very essence of prayer; for it is worthy of careful and

constant contemplation, that, however diversified are the expressions employed by the Holy Ghost in exhibiting the character of real prayer, the soul of the suppliant, including, of course, his understanding, will, and affections, is at all times in Scripture represented as in a state of holy activity. "Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation." "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." "Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him." "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you alway, labouring fervently for you in prayers that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." These striking passages of holy writ attest the accuracy of the beautiful definition of prayer given in the Shorter Catechism, "that it is the offering up of the desires of the heart unto God;" and, assuredly, not less conformable to Scripture is the subsequent portion of the definition — "for things agreeable to his will." For it is said by the Apostle John, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." And, lest any believer should be led to entertain hard thoughts of God in consequence of the limits set to the presentation of the desires of the heart, it has pleased the Holy Ghost to record not a few exceeding great and precious promises expressive of the almost universal boundlessness of the privileges of a disciple in pleading at a throne of grace. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask *what ye will*, and it shall be done unto you." "*All things whatsoever* ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." The other parts of prayer it is not necessary to particularize at length, inasmuch as the quotations already made from the Word of God exhibit incidentally, but clearly, the several divisions of prayer, namely, adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving; and also testify that supplications must be made in the name of Christ. But there is one grand truth connected with prayer, which deserves especial regard, and which has not, in the Shorter Catechism, that prominence to which it is entitled, namely, that the desires of the heart must be offered up to God in dependence upon the aids of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is a mournful and

humiliating fact, that our minds are so obscured by the moral and spiritual film consequent upon the Fall, that we do not even know our real necessities, and, when these are made known, cannot even plead them aright at a throne of grace. Both with regard to the matter and the act of prayer, a suppliant is now blind and impotent apart from the grace of the Holy Ghost. Hence the same Apostle who gave the commandment, "Pray without ceasing," was careful to declare, "praying alway, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

II. We must now proceed to the consideration of the kind of prayer enjoined in the text, namely, private devotion.

Personal privacy, in the strictest sense of the term, assuredly is embodied in a precept, which not only repeats no fewer than eight times the personal pronoun in the singular number, but which also commands that the door of the closet shall be carefully shut, and solitary communion held with Him who seeth in secret. The individuality and seclusion of the precept demands a careful contemplation. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." No doubt the immediate cause of giving forth the commandment was to issue a caution against the sinful ostentation of the Pharisees in their devotional exercises, but the peculiarity of the precept, in so far as privacy is concerned, is amply sanctioned by other remarkable portions of the word of God. "And Jacob was left *alone*, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." "Elisha went in, therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord." "Peter put them all forth and kneeled down and prayed." "Cornelius said, four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house." "Nathanael said unto Jesus, whence knowest thou me; Jesus answered and said unto him, before that Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." These historical facts shew that the servants of the Most High God were accustomed to give ear to the divine exhortation, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." The obligation of personal private prayer, is, however, in no way so irresistibly made manifest as in the example of our blessed Lord and Saviour. He who gave the precept of the text while on earth, yielded obedience alike to its spirit and its letter. "When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come he was there alone." "Then cometh Jesus with

them to a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death : tarry ye here and watch with me. And he went a little *farther*, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." So distinctly, indeed, is private devotion a part of the divine arrangements, that God has declared one of the designs of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost to be the production of personal prayer. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and the land shall mourn, every family apart and their wives apart."

There are certain portions of the divine procedure so enveloped in inscrutable mystery, as to baffle the conjectures of the most daring intellects; and there are parts of the ways of God so impenetrable to the feeble and finite faculties of man, that he whose heart is not haughty, and whose eyes are not lofty, and who does not exercise himself in great matters, or in things too high for him, is glad to say with regard to all such mysteries of plan and procedure on the part of Jehovah, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." But, most assuredly, the obligation and advantages of private devotion are not to be ranked among the things unfathomable by man. Not only are the benefits resulting from personal prayer palpable, but they are also varied and extensive. Let us glance at a few of them.

(1.) Private prayer is a test whereby may be ascertained the reality and the elevation of personal religion. In public services of a devotional kind, there are various carnal considerations and influences which tend to quicken the intellect and excite the emotions. Should one possessed of a fine ear and voice, a pure taste, and an extensive acquaintance with the sublime language of Scripture, be the leader of the devotions of a public assembly, indifference to the exercise on the part of the members of the congregation is barely possible, and a momentary and pleasing elevation of mind is far more likely to be experienced. Should a professed servant of God, on the other hand, be summoned to be the organ of the confession, the supplications and the thanksgivings of a worshipping people, the consciousness of a duty to be done decently and in order, the influence of sympathy with the surrounding people, the iteration of familiar words linked with hallowed associations, the power of habit, and other matters of a moral and mechanical character, conspire to communicate to prayer an extrinsic interest, issuing in its becoming

external performance. None of these things, however, regulate or influence the duties of the closet. There no eye regards, but the eye which never winks—no ear hears but the ear which never shuts—no witness marks but the divine witness who searches the heart and who tries the reins of the children of men. The suppliant in the closet is holding communion with God alone, through the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Sounds are now nothing, words are vain; sympathies of an outward kind are inoperative. The state of the heart now, in part at least, indicates itself. Should real devotion be implanted and maintained in the soul by the Holy Ghost, the fire will burn, and thoughts sublime and simple, confessions deep and many, desires holy and heavenly, thanksgivings sincere and abundant, will all proceed from the renewed heart, although they may not be sensibly clothed in peculiar and pertinent phraseology. Should, on the other hand, the devotion of the sanctuary be only fed and fostered by things seen and external, the visits to the closet will be few and constrained, the mind will wander, the heart will be dull and unaffected, the affections will not be engaged. There will only be a casual effort to recall a few familiar words and to put up a few familiar petitions, in order that the duty of prayer may be gone through in semblance if not in substance. Private prayer is thus the pulse indicating the beatings of the renewed heart—the barometer announcing the elevation or depression of spiritual desires. Alas! in how many closets are there to be seen only the heartlessness of formalism, or the mockery of spiritual services! Now, if it be a blessing to be undeceived in regard to being a child of God, a cold and barren, an unfrequented and unrelished closet, affords one mean of revealing formalism, and detecting hypocrisy, and disclosing self-deception; and this ought to be reckoned, at all events, a subsidiary benefit of no trifling importance, resulting from the obligation of private prayer

(2.) Private prayer is an admirable school to prepare the Christian for the discharge of public duties. It constitutes the reproach of the present age of the Christian Church, that so few of its members are either able or willing to engage publicly in devotional exercises. Real or alleged inability to offer up unto God the desires of the heart forms the excuse for not erecting the family altar—for not paying a visit to the chamber of sickness or the house of mourning—for not bearing a part in the duties of social meetings for prayer—for not taking a share in the services of a Sabbath-school—and for declining to accept of the office of the elder in the Church of Christ. Now, with every disposition to cultivate and maintain the charity that hopeth all things, we cannot but believe, that were the duties of the closet more carefully and pro-

perly performed, an inability to lead the devotions of others in a sphere more or less public, would not be so frequently felt and pleaded. Liberty of heart in private will ultimately issue in liberty of speech in public. The fear of man, which operates banefully in public, is neither known nor felt in the closet. There no one can canvas the ability of the suppliant, or pass animadversions on his gifts and his graces, or put modesty on trial. There, delivered from outward hindrances, and accustomed to pray for himself and others, he may acquire that acquaintance with sound words and those expressions of right desires, which will qualify him to present the supplications of others.

(3.) A third advantage resulting from the exercise of private prayer, is the possession of a safeguard in the season of trial and temptation. Alas! how often has the careless professor of the truth learned from bitter experience that the relinquishment of private devotion, or its formal and heartless performance, has been a provocative to the assaults of Satan, and an encouragement to the growth and the maintenance of sinful emotions and passions. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that even a believer who has not restrained prayer before God, cannot calculate upon being exempted from the attacks of his two great spiritual adversaries—sin and Satan. On the contrary, when in consequence of a consciousness of being the subject of their onsets, he flees to his closet as a refuge, he still must reckon on having with him there the remains of a carnal and corrupt nature, and, it may be, the realized presence of the adversary of souls presenting subtle temptations to his heart, in despite of a shut door and a secret chamber. But the safety of the believer is to continue instant in prayer—to realize the holiness of Him whom he addresses, that the sinful emotions of the hour may be dispossessed—the prevalency of the intercession of the only Mediator, who prayed for a tempted disciple that his faith should not fail; and the grace of that Spirit who can guide into all truth and holiness the humble disciple sought to be led through the force of temptation into error and sin. Every blow from the tempter should be met with the cry, “Lord help me!”—every felt sinking of the soul in the mire of temptation, with the petition, “Lord save me”—every dark cloud that conceals the object of faith and the ground of security, with the supplication, “Lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance, and plant my feet upon a rock!” When the believer is told to put on the whole armour of God, that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil, he is at the same time commanded to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

(4.) But private prayer is not only a *standard* by which to test spiritual attainments—a *school* to prepare for public duties—a *safeguard* in the period of temptation, but likewise a *solace* in the season of solitude and affliction. Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. And of the few days which constitute the limits of human existence, how many are spent in labour and sorrow! In passing through the haunts of busy men, the thought seldom finds a place in the mind, that in the midst of a city full of people there are to be found many bruised spirits shrinking from companionship with the stout hearted and the prosperous, from the absence of a common sympathy; and likewise many a solitary occupant of a sick chamber, so long excluded by lingering disease from the activities of society, as to have virtually led the life of a recluse when surrounded by a crowded population. When the circumstances which have induced this mental and bodily suffering first occurred, there was probably no lack of sympathizing visits, and of charitable attentions, from neighbours, kinsmen, and friends. But familiarity with distress produces apathy, and sore sufferers are soon left in a great measure to themselves and solitude. Then is the blessedness of the promise recognised and realised, “Lo I am with you always.” Then does a child of God know the truth of the seeming paradox—I am nevertheless alone than when alone. Besides, a sufferer is not slow to learn experimentally that mere human sympathy is a most imperfect, if not a most miserable, comforter. Like Mary of Bethany, a stricken spirit seeks rather to be alone at the grave, than to consort with a great company of professed comforters. In solitude, too, the Spirit of God has been often realized primarily and specially as the Comforter. As Joseph, ere he made himself known to his brethren, caused every man to go out from him, so does the Holy Ghost often discover himself in his endearing ministrations, when none is near but the object of his grace. It was when the Ethiopian eunuch was sitting *alone* in his chariot reading Esaias the prophet, that the Spirit said unto Philip, “Go near and join thyself to this chariot.”

We must now glance very hastily at the remaining subjects of our discourse, and

III. Let us consider the object of prayer—thy Father who is in secret. God alone is the proper object of prayer. Besotted Papists are accustomed to pray to saints and angels, thereby recognising a plurality of mediators in the very face of the Scriptural declaration, “There is one God and one Mediator betwixt God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” A little reflection, also, might make manifest that angels

and the spirits of just men made perfect cannot know the heart—cannot discover the needs of suppliants, and cannot extend required relief. The object of prayer, to meet the necessities of him who cries, must be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; and it were utter blasphemy to ascribe these incommunicable attributes of Jehovah to finite creatures, however holy and exalted. But, in point of fact, the Godhead is the proper object of prayer. And Godhead alike belongs to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so that all having the same Godhead are the objects of worship. The economical relations subsisting between the various persons of the Godhead ought to be continually and carefully borne in mind in every application to a throne of grace. For, through Christ we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father. We must think on the love of the Father, the mediation of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Ghost, and at the sametime have an ultimate regard to the Father. For this cause, said Paul, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” These things are a great mystery to the natural man, but they constitute matter of plain revelation, and form subjects of unfeigned joy to the renewed mind.

The main design of the addition to the title of Father “who is in secret” obviously is to exhibit in contrast the duty of a disciple with the practice of a Pharisee in the matter of prayer. “The hypocrites pray in the corner of the streets that they may be seen of men; but thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father who is in secret.” Other subordinate purposes, however, are gained by reminding the suppliant of the Divine Omniscience. How solemnizing the reflection, when about to pray, unseen by mortal eye, unheard by mortal ear, that there is an eye which runs to and fro throughout the whole earth, and an ear that is ever open to the unuttered cry. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” How consoling, too, the thought of the Divine Omniscience in connection with the Divine promises and the believer’s wants! Few considerations are more simple and sublime than the fact, that the very doctrine of the Divine Omniscience, which startles the sinner, and renders him of all men most miserable, is the truth which cheers the heart of a saint, and supports him under his countless afflictions. He rejoices to reflect that the God who has promised to blot out all his sins—to supply all his need—to listen to all his requests—and to receive him at last into glory, is the very God to whom he can say, “O Lord, thou hast searched me and

known me, thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off; thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." Perhaps, also, there is an allusion to the Father seeing in secret in order to illustrate the character of the promised reward. From what other motive than a desire to honour God, can a suppliant enter into his closet and bend his knee in prayer. There is no human eye to mark his humble attitude—no human ear to listen to his becoming words—no human tongue to proclaim his devotional services—God alone is sought to be served, and God has said, "Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

And thus we are brought, in conclusion, to notice,

IV. The reward promised in the text. "Thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Surely, there is reward enough in a creature of a day being permitted to address the eternal God—in a guilty creature being permitted, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to petition for the forgiveness of his countless and aggravated sins—in a voluntary outcast from his father's house being permitted to petition for a renewal of paternal favour—a readmission into a paternal home. Surely there is a rich reward in a subject of the King of kings being permitted to enter into the royal presence *alone* and frequently, not on set days and appointed seasons, but freely and openly, at all times and under all circumstances. It constituted the boast of the proud Haman, that Queen Esther did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but himself. The humble disciple desires no such exclusive privileges; but he rejoices in the permission of coming *alone*, continually, to have a rich feast of communion with the Divine Majesty. Surely there is a noble reward in a being made up of ten thousand wants, and ten times ten thousand weaknesses being empowered and emboldened to ask where he is certain to receive—to seek where no one ever sought in vain, and to knock where he is certain to find a ready and a secure refuge. Surely, surely there is a precious recompense in being permitted, in straits ever present—ever recurring—ever continuing, to go to him who is able to do—who is able to do abundantly—who is able to do exceeding abundantly—who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask—who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. But, in addition to these rich rewards, there is a reward in store—a reward in the sight of angels and an assembled universe, for him who enters into his closet and shuts his door and prays unto his Father who seeth in secret. The open recompense

promised in the text, is doubtless the recompense at the resurrection of the just. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me." Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

SERMON XCII.

PARDON OF SIN.

REV. ALEXANDER M'WATT, ROTHES.

"I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me."—*Jsa. xxxiii. 8.*

In reading the preceding chapter, you will observe, brethren, that therein the prophet Jeremiah foretells and denounces the terrible judgments of Jehovah against the Jewish people, because of their excessive sins; and you will also notice, that these denunciations of present wrath are accompanied by promises of future mercy. The chapter before us is an enlarged repetition and confirmation of these promises, in which, to prevent the Jews from sinking into despair, amidst the threatened desolations of their country, and the dispersions of their people, the Almighty graciously intimates his purpose to recall them from their exile, and to re-establish them in peace and happiness in their beloved land. In perusing this chapter, you will observe that the leading promises contained in it are, that their country, which was about to be laid waste, shall, after a period of desolation, be repaired—their ruined city rebuilt—their dispersed people remembered in mercy—their sins, which provoked the Divine wrath, pardoned—their exiles restored to their happy country; and thus a way shall be opened up for the coming of the Messiah, when the house of David, and the house of Levi, and the house of Israel, shall flourish again, and be established in the kingdom of Christ.

All these promises have, in their type and tendency, a marked reference to gospel times. The peculiar one, so fully and so strongly proclaimed in my text, holds a very high and prominent place among the New Covenant or New Testament blessings. Its importance and value may be somewhat understood by the fact, that upon it depends the true happiness of every individual of our apostate race; yea, that it is absolutely necessary to our present peace and our future bliss. Let us,

then, bliss and magnify the name of the Lord, that, in his abundant mercy and loving-kindness, he has graciously declared to the guilty and justly condemned sons of men, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me."

You are aware, dear brethren, that many important truths in religion are to a great extent discoverable by the mere light of Nature, and knowledge thus attained is so far valuable as it has its use; but pardon of sin, the most important of all religious truths to fallen man, is entirely a doctrine of the blessed Bible. From the infinite benevolence of God, so essential to his moral nature, and so eminently displayed in his various works, we might indeed conjecture, and the principle of self-love within us might induce us to hope, that he would not finally condemn and destroy, at least, penitent transgressors; but beyond a mere conjecture or uncertain hope, we could not advance under the guidance of unassisted reason. For, by the same means by which we should come to the knowledge that God is the Creator of the universe, and that infinite benevolence is inseparable from his being, we should also discover that infinite perfection in every other moral attribute is no less essential to the Divine nature; and, consequently, he must be infinitely opposed to all moral evil and corruption. Whether, therefore, such of the moral and responsible creatures of God as had sinned against him might be pardoned and restored to his favour on any terms, without impugning his honour and glory as an infinitely righteous governor, our unassisted reason never could infer from his works or his moral government of the world. The *Bible*, and the *Bible* alone, tells us authoritatively, and therefore satisfactorily, that "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have sinned against him." (Dan. ix. 9.) Oh! what shall we render to the Lord our God for this unspeakable grace! Instead of being left to grope in the dark, and to depend on unsatisfying conjecture, or uncertain hope, respecting a matter of such infinite importance to our peace and happiness, he has given us a full and clear revelation of it—a revelation displaying the most tender mercy, the most unbounded love, and the richest grace. We are told, not on the authority of man—no, nor even of angels—but from the very mouth of God himself, that this is his name and memorial throughout all generations, "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Ex. xxxiv. 6. 7.) And we are told in the same blessed record, that in the exercise of this ineffable grace our God neither forgoes his holiness,

nor compromises his righteousness, but is just when he justifies the ungodly, and righteous when he forgives the sinner (Rom. iii. 24-26), even when "He cleanseth us from all our iniquity, whereby we have sinned against him; and when he pardoneth all our iniquities, whereby we have sinned, and whereby we have transgressed against him."

In entering upon a more particular exposition of the text, I would remark that the Holy Spirit, evidently in it, and invariably throughout the whole sacred Scriptures, holds forth the pardoning mercy of God through the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as in every respect suited and extended to all the spiritual wants and necessities of a soul under condemnation of sin, and however sinful, and consequently is calculated to afford the fullest peace of conscience now, and the most assured confidence of salvation from all future misery. I would remark, then, that it is a full pardon, comprehending, or extending to, all sins of every kind, and of whatever number; that it is a free pardon, depending on no conditions whatever to be performed by the sinner as the ground of its bestowal; and that it is an everlasting pardon, not to be withdrawn nor altered at any future period. I shall now endeavour to show you that this is the nature and character of the pardon of sin which is proclaimed in my text, and which God, in his infinite grace and mercy, is offering to us sinners in the gospel.

1st, The pardon of sin which Almighty God, in infinite mercy and grace, is now offering to sinners of mankind in the Gospel, is a full pardon—that is, it comprehends, and extends to, every sin, however sinful, and includes all sins, however numerous. The text, as you may observe, does not say that God will pardon some sins only, or all sins of a particular kind, while others, differing in enormity, or aggravation, or any other circumstance, do not come within the pale of the promised or offered amnesty. Its language is absolutely indefinite; it says—"All their iniquities whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed"—that is, if language is to be understood literally, all entirely without limitation or exception.

Were there not thus an entire and universal act of oblivion passed on all the sins of believers—did not God's pardoning mercy extend to all, and comprehend all sins of whatever kind and number—no convinced and penitent sinner could, on this side of the grave, come to the enjoyment or experience of a really full and stable peace of conscience. The peace and joy of the Christian—that is, of the awakened and converted sinner, who by faith has fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the Gospel—spring wholly from a sense of pardon now and assurance of perfect bliss hereafter; and both these are entertained upon what he is satisfied are the amplest and most undoubted

grounds—the firm persuasion that God hath proclaimed a full and unlimited pardon in the Gospel. Deprive him of this persuasion, or shake his confidence in this assured faith and hope, and thereby give him to fear that he has no just ground for this persuasion, and that it is questionable whether God has revealed a full pardon in his Gospel message, and immediately you break up his peace, and dispossess him of all his joy. Humanly speaking, the least sinful among men, who is truly awakened by the quickening and enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, must be conscious to himself of sins and transgressions innumerable, and aggravated in incalculable and unknown ways and degrees. If, then, there be not a full amnesty, an entire act of oblivion, passed upon all the sins of men—if the forgiveness of God extend only to some sins, and not to all—must not even he, who to appearance is the least sinful, if he be sensibly alive to the condemning nature of sin, have his heart and mind unceasingly writhing under the painful apprehension that some sin or sins stand chargeable against him, which God's proclamation does not include? It is evident, therefore, that no proclamation of pardon or forgiveness of sin, which is not full and unlimited, can afford an awakened and penitent sinner the peace and joy promised in the Gospel.

Even in a state of grace or regeneration, in which it is said that there is "a new creation," or that man is "a new creature," in which the bias and disposition of his heart are really turned to God, still in himself he is unholy—the old corrupt nature still remains, and he carries about with him "a body of death, a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members, and constraining him often to do the evil which he would not." (Romans vii. 23.) If, then, the child of God thus frequently falls into sin, though unwillingly—and if when the Holy Spirit proclaims, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"—(Galatians iii. 10)—we are to believe that thereby is declared, that "every sin, whether of believer or unbeliever, of regenerate or unregenerate, deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come"—is it not evident, if the pardoning mercy of God extend not to all sins, and if in the act of justification the guilt of every sin be not removed from off the sinner, and its penalty entirely remitted, that not only no mourning penitent has sufficient encouragement to look to the Gospel for comfort, but even believers themselves have not full ground to rejoice in the revelation of grace?

Hence, in order to afford peace and comfort to awakened and alarmed penitents, and to confirm the peace and joy of settled believers, the par-

don proclaimed in the Gospel must be full, extending to all sins. And, blessed be God, as it is thus necessary, so it is fully granted. It was foretold in ancient prophecy that, when the Messiah should come "to make his soul an offering for sin," he should, by his atoning death, "finish transgressions, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." Our blessed Saviour having come, as it was thus written of him, and having suffered the "just for us the unjust," the Gospel testimony of his vicarious sufferings declares that his expiatory death has made a full and perfect atonement for all the sins of his people—that he has thereby fully reconciled them to God—that "his blood cleanseth them from all sin"—that "he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him," and that "there is no condemnation to them who by faith are in him." It is, then, in reference to the atoning sacrifice offered by our blessed Redeemer in the room of a guilty world, and to the excellency and infinite efficacy of that sacrifice, that our gracious God declares in our text that when he pardons any of our sinful race, he grants them not a partial but a plenary forgiveness. "I will cleanse them from *all* their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me, and I will pardon *all* their iniquities whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against me."

Thus our heavenly Sovereign, against whom we have offended, whose laws we have violated, and who alone can forgive, as he alone can condemn, proclaims in the fullest and most express terms, that, for the sake of his dear Son, who undertook and accomplished the redemption of guilty sinners, he will pardon our iniquities and transgressions, and not merely some or a few of them, or those of a particular kind, but all, all entirely, without exception or distinction. And he tells us not only that he may or can, in consistency with his honour and glory, thus pardon all our iniquities, but that he wills, he wishes, he desires to pardon us thus fully, however numerous and aggravated our sins, so that not a vestige of them shall or can rise in judgment against us. Well might the prophet Micah exult in the revelation made to him of this unlimited pardoning mercy of God! "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." For ever, indeed, he might retain his anger, and magnify the glory of his justice in the condemnation and eternal misery of every sinner; but "he delighteth in mercy," and his mercy triumpheth over judgment to the praise of the glory of his grace. Therefore it is that he reveals himself to sinners of mankind, not as an incensed adversary, but, though an offended, yet as a merciful and compassionate

Father, declaring his boundless grace and love to his undutiful children. "He will turn again," says the fore-named prophet; "he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities," and "will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Oh! is there not a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, in redeeming love and pardoning grace that is altogether incomprehensible? Our offended God not only looks with compassion on poor miserable and wretched sinners in their lost and helpless condition, but declares that although they have rebelled against him in the basest and most ungrateful manner, he will subdue their iniquities, he will remove all their guilt by atoning blood, and destroy the power of their indwelling corruption by sovereign grace.

Is it true, then, that the infinitely holy and righteous Jehovah is thus a God of pardon, boundless in mercy, and infinite in grace? that he hath proclaimed himself in irreversible terms to be "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin"—that he hath declared that he will pardon all our iniquities, even the greatest sins and transgressions, and that the exercise of this ineffable grace towards sinners shall be to him a name of joy, a praise, and an honour? Oh, is it true that the infinitely holy Jehovah declares, as we have it in his blessed Word, that he glories in his pardoning mercy, as one of the brightest gems that adorn his eternal crown? Doth God, indeed—the infinitely holy and righteous God—pardon iniquity and pass by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage, and retain not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy? Then, let no awakened and convinced sinner, however sinful and unworthy, despair as if there was no hope in God for him. The Holy Scriptures testify that there is hope, the fullest and most encouraging, for every living man. They declare—and O let the heart of every sinner among us, even the most sinful, exult at the declaration—they declare, "that where sin abounds in man the sinner, grace doth, much more abound in Christ the Saviour." Yes, yes, ye will find in the Holy Scriptures, God himself not only recording in words, but testifying by many extraordinary examples, that his pardoning mercy, flowing from infinite grace and love, through the medium of a once-crucified but now living and exalted Saviour, utterly obliterates the greatest sins and the most aggravated guilt. "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me, and I will pardon all their iniquity whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against me."

2dly, The pardon proclaimed in the Gospel is free—it is vouchsafed by an infinitely gracious God, suspended on no condition whatever

to be performed by the sinner as the meritorious ground of its bestowal. We say meritorious; because, although faith is required and is absolutely necessary, in terms of the provisions of the covenant of grace, in order to the fruition of the benefits of Christ's atoning merits, faith has no merit in itself—it is, as divines commonly call it, the instrumental, not the procuring cause of pardon or of salvation. It is this absolute freeness of the forgiveness of sin proclaimed in the Gospel that makes it worthy of an infinitely gracious God's bestowal, and good news to poor, miserable, and wretched sinners. Were it otherwise, it could be no rest to an awakened and alarmed conscience—to a weary and heavy sin-laden soul. We are poor, ruined, and insolvent debtors, and, if our creditor forgive us not freely as well as fully, we must go to prison, and remain there for ever without the least hope of release. But he, knowing our destitution, and utter inability to pay the least proportion of our enormous debt, invites us to come unto him to have it wholly cancelled, and thus have our fears all dispelled—our consciences relieved—and our hearts and souls set at rest. Listen, brethren, to the Divine word in its gracious invitations. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Is. lv. 7.) “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Is. i. 18.) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Mat. xi. 28.) “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.” (Is. lv. 1.) “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Rev. xxii. 17.)

Such are the invitations of God to sinners to come to him to receive the full pardon of their sins. Now, if God did not forgive us freely as well as fully, such declarations ascribed to him would not only be a mocking of men, but a foul reproach on his infinitely holy and righteous character. “But the word of our God shall stand for ever;” and he hath declared, not only in the passages just cited, but in many others, that pardon of sin is of Divine grace, vouchsafed to the chief of sinners, suspended on no conditions whatever to be performed by him as its meriting cause. “In whom,” says the apostle, “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption

that is in Christ Jesus." True, in regard to Christ, our covenant head and surety, the pardon of the least of our transgressions was suspended on the performance of the most arduous terms—the most painful conditions. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; and he poured out his soul unto death." Thus, on the part of Christ, who undertook to redeem us, to satisfy Divine justice in our room, and to reconcile us to God, not only the most perfect obedience and satisfaction to the Divine law, but the enduring of the wrath and curse of God, and subjection to indescribable misery, pain, and death, even the infamous and excruciating death of the cross, were the rigorous conditions and dreadful terms of the pardon of our sins.

But, although these were the terms and conditions imposed upon our blessed and gracious Redeemer as the ground of our pardon, it is free—absolutely free to every sinner. The full, the utmost price of our redemption has been paid already by our covenant head and substitute, and it is therefore vouchsafed to sinners of mankind, not upon any condition, but "according to the riches of the grace of God." This is part of Jehovah's language, in which it is proclaimed, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." (Is. xliii. 25.) Observe, he does not say, "for thy sake," or "because I have seen some merit, some worthiness, something amiable, something prepossessing, or engaging, or attractive in thee, however small," but "for mine own sake." Here, then, is Jehovah declaring, in the fullest and most express terms, that he blotteth out transgressions freely through the atoning blood of his eternal Son. The Father and the Son are one; therefore, when he saith, that he blotteth out transgressions for his own sake, he evidently speaketh in reference to the act of Christ, when, by the one offering of himself, he satisfied Divine justice, and reconciled us to God.

Such language teems with all the encouragement, consolation, and comfort, which a mourning and anxious penitent can desire. It recognises all his wretchedness, and points out his only help. It tells him that, however numerous and aggravated his transgressions, and however destitute of hope in himself, Jehovah, whom he has offended, and under whose righteous condemnation and wrath he is lying, blotteth out his transgressions; and that, not because of any the least merit in him the sinner, but because of the finished and complete, and infinitely meritorious work of Christ the Saviour. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." If such a declaration be not sufficient to show the absolute freeness of God's pardoning mercy, it certainly must

puzzle the most inventive genius to contrive a form of speech or words to express it. Rejoice, then, oh ! ye heavens, and shout aloud for joy, oh ! ye sons of men ; the Lord God, who delighteth in mercy, vouchsafes for his own sake, and therefore freely, absolutely freely, pardon to every sinner that cometh unto him through Christ. The Apostle Paul, desirous to keep a sense of this marvellous grace of God alive in the hearts of Christians, says, in his epistle to the Romans, " When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." (Rom. v. 10.) Observe, he does not say, " We were reconciled on account of any thing amiable or praiseworthy which we possessed, or any thing good or meritorious which we had done," but, " When we were enemies"—enemies of God—" walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Surely such conduct, expressed in such language, absolutely contradicts every idea of merit. If sinners are reconciled to God while they are yet in enmity against him, and pardoned when they are justly condemned as transgressors of his most holy law, boasting is truly excluded, and grace reigns and triumphs to the glory of God, who loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

3dly, The pardon proclaimed to sinners in the gospel is everlasting. This makes it a complete pardon. A full pardon, as already shown, opens the door of mercy to every sinner, so that none, however sinful, has reason to imagine himself excluded. A free pardon encourages the chief of sinners, the poor, the blind, the naked, the wretched, the miserable, the helpless, to come to God for it, assured not only that he is welcome to come, but that it is just for such as he is that such a pardon can be and is proclaimed. But an everlasting pardon, which is also full and free, gives the fullest and most unmingled peace and joy in believing. For, though full and free, if revocable or changeable, believers under this uncertainty could not have perfect peace of conscience now, nor rejoice with full confidence in the hope of glory hereafter. But innumerable passages in the Holy Scriptures evince this glorious truth, viz., when God pardons sinners, for Christ's sake, he pardons them fully, freely, irrevocably, and irreversibly. " I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," saith he, " and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." This is the declaration of the God of truth—a declaration that enters into the very essence of the new and everlasting covenant. If, then, He who has a right to punish, and who alone can pardon, thus declares his promise being unalterable, may we not rest assured that our forgiveness is everlasting—that our pardon is unchangeable ?

But the unchangeable perpetuity of the pardon proclaimed in the

gospel, is not merely a simple promise which God has made—which of itself is more than sufficient to satisfy us of its unchangeable nature ; it is, moreover, a promise in a covenant form—a promise which the faithfulness and infinite rectitude of God are engaged to make good. The continuance, therefore, of pardon does not depend on conditions to be performed in future by the pardoned, more than it was granted on the ground of merit already existing. The only foundation on which it stands, is the completeness and perpetual efficacy of the atoning sacrifice once offered for all by Jesus Christ, and the inviolable faithfulness of an unchanging and unchangeable covenanting God. It will continue, therefore, not only in time, but throughout all eternity, in full force and in all its glory. “My covenant,” saith God, “will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my mouth.” “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” said Christ, “but my word shall not pass away.” And the Apostle Peter says, “The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” “As far as east is distant from the west,” saith the Psalmist, “so far hath the Lord removed our transgressions from us.” “In those days, and in that time,” saith the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah, “the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none ; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found ;” and the reason assigned is, “For I will pardon whom I reserve ;” and again, by the prophet Isaiah, “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee ; for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” May we not add with the Psalmist, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.”

Such is the nature, and such are the properties of that perfect and complete forgiveness which is with God—that glorious pardon proclaimed in our text. It is full, it is free, it is everlasting, it is every way worthy of the God who grants it ; it has every requisite suitable to the state and wants of sinful men—even the most sinful. David, sensible of the value of it, and rejoicing in the comfort of its possession, exclaims in the warmest gratitude, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.” And who of those who have been made partakers of the same unfathomable grace, can fail to join with him in the same anthem of praise ? And what more comforting, what more encouraging to sinners bowed down under a sense of their guilt and helplessness, bruised in their spirit and broken in their heart, who are mourning over their sins, and anxiously

desiring deliverance, than the gracious declaration in my text, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me."

Perhaps some of you, my dear friends, may be inclined to say now that we have expressed ourselves too strongly on the doctrine which we have been thus endeavouring to explain; and that such an exhibition to sinners of the boundlessness of the Divine mercy and grace, as we have thus given, is calculated to encourage a continuance in sin, or a bold presumption in the commission of crime. We have spoken, dear friends, because we believe; and though we are aware that the grace of God has been frequently turned or abused to licentiousness, we fear not the detestable and horrid consequence thus ignorantly imagined. In the declarations which have been made in your hearing, the utmost care has been taken that the pure Word of God alone should be the ground, the support, and the defence of every assertion we have made; and we feel persuaded that nothing has been uttered but what is thus fully supported and defended. If so, why then imagine a consequence guaranteed to be utterly impossible by the nature and character of that infinitely holy and righteous God, to whom alone we are indebted for the whole discovery of this most precious truth? Upon this ground, alone, then, we stand, viz., it is impossible for God to be the author of sin, directly or indirectly. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works." (Psalm cxlv. 17.) Whatever, therefore, the Lord hath revealed to be his will, and his way, however contrary to our notions and imaginings, must be holy, and tend to promote and accomplish that which is holy. And the doctrine of pardon in all its fulness, freeness, and eternal and unchangeable perpetuity, which is the revealed expression of his holy will in the gospel, as we have just shown you, is a holy doctrine—holy in its nature, holy in its tendency, and holy in its effects; proceeding from an infinitely holy God, and redounding to the glory of his unchanging and unchangeable holiness.

I am not going to discuss, at present, the gracious and blessed effects of pardon, as revealed in the Gospel, on the moral nature and character of man. I will merely state, that no man is truly pardoned, or in the gracious enjoyment or possession of the pardon of his sins, except the Holy Spirit have first quickened him from spiritual death into spiritual life, without having first convinced him of his sin and misery, enlightened his mind in the knowledge of Christ, and renewed his will, and thus persuaded and enabled him to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered in the Gospel. Now, it is the special teaching of the Holy Scriptures, that the same Holy Spirit that quickens men, who are in a state of

spiritual death into spiritual life, or inspires them with the first principles of spiritual living, so as to flee to God through Christ for pardon, never abandons the work which he has thus begun, but will carry it on unto perfection, renewing and sanctifying our nature until our souls completely reflect the perfectly holy and righteous image of God our Saviour. We fear not, then, to proclaim that the grace of God is boundless, and that the blood of Christ is possessed of an infinite efficacy to cleanse from all sins, however numerous, and from every sin however sinful, and that freely and eternally. Oh! dearest friends and brethren, this is the true Gospel of God our Saviour, whereby there is glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good will to man. And if we would win souls to Christ, we must thus preach it in its fulness, freeness, and eternal and unchangeable perpetuity, otherwise we betray the solemn and awfully responsible trust committed to us.

Where, then, is the poor and trembling sinner, who, awakened to the consciousness of the exceeding number, magnitude, and guilt of his sins, fears to come to God for pardon, under the impression that there is no hope for him? Ah! my friend, where have you learned this strange idea? "there is no hope for you?" Where? Not in the Bible certainly, for the Bible testimony is very far otherwise. It is in your own heart—a heart that is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and how it has been insinuated there I do not wait at present to say. The Bible, the only true revelation of the blessed and holy will and mind of God which we possess, assures us that there is hope even for the chief of sinners, and that of the strongest and most encouraging kind. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," (1 Tim. i. 15), is the language of the Bible—yea, its pervading testimony is, "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin," (1 John i. 7); and, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," (Rom. v. 20.) Oh! yes; the Bible contains innumerable such statements, all of which assure us that, though our sins be numerous and aggravated beyond expression, with our God there is forgiveness. Not, indeed, forgiveness that we should continue in sin, but that in this, the accepted time and day of salvation, we should turn from our sins and come unto him, that "He may be merciful to our unrighteousness, and our sins and iniquities he may remember no more." (Heb. viii. 12.) Let us, then, in the full belief of this rich mercy of God, turn now unto him. He is "waiting to be gracious." (Is. xxx. 18.) "He is a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." (Neh. ix. 17.) "Come unto me," saith he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Come now,

and let us reason together, saith the Lord ; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Yea, in my text he says, " I will cleanse you from all your iniquity, whereby ye have sinned against me ; and I will pardon all your iniquities, whereby ye have sinned, and whereby ye have transgressed against me."

To the careless, impenitent sinner, who is wholly occupied with the tantalizing and transitory objects of time, indifferent to the all-important interests of eternity, we would now say a few words in closing our discourse. It is declared, in no uncertain nor doubtful terms, that " The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Ps. ix. 17.) Thus the unpardoned, impenitent sinner shall die the awful second death ; his soul and body shall be cast into the place of unutterable woe, there to endure throughout the endless ages of eternity the unmitigated sufferings of an outcast from God, and from all hope of deliverance from the worm that dieth not, and from the fire that is not quenched. Should not this startle him somewhat ?—should it not arouse him from his stupor—his fatal security—his spiritual indifference ? Impenitent sinner, you are advancing every moment to the verge of eternity—you know not whether you be a hair-breadth from it—and the condemnation of God is impending over you. What, then, more dreadful and alarming than your state ? You are now possibly on the very brink of an eternal world ; yea, as it were, nodding in your spiritual slumber on the very edge of the burning lake, and you know not but that the next nod may dash you headlong into it. Oh ! how can you sleep in your sins ? How can you thus slumber and take your rest, when you know not but the next hour—yea, the next moment, may close your eyes in death—transmit you into an eternal world—place you at the bar of an offended God, and put you beyond all possibility of relief ? Another moment and your life may be gone—another moment and your soul may be lost ! Ah ! sinner, what charm is it—what fascination—what delusion weds you thus to your sins—shuts your eyes upon their manifest consequences, and carries you on with it unconcerned, unalarmed, into the gulf of ruin and unending wretchedness ? Your condition is fearfully perilous. Oh ! it is indeed alarmingly dangerous ; and persisting in it, there remaineth for you nothing " but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. x. 27.) But perilous as it is, it is my privilege, it is my office and commission to announce to you this day, that it is not altogether desperate. " The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save ; neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear." (Isaiah lix. 1.) " Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should

die ? saith the Lord God ; and not that he should return from his ways and live ? As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" (Ezekiel xviii. 23)—xxxiii. 11. " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah lv. 7.) Such are the endearing terms in which " the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious " is now addressing this wicked and rebellious world, and inviting all its sinful inhabitants to come unto him, that " He may be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities he may remember no more." May he give you grace to believe and comply with his invitation, that when ye turn into him, he may " cleanse you from all your iniquity, whereby ye have sinned against him, and pardon all your iniquities whereby ye have sinned and whereby ye have transgressed against him." And to his ever blessed name be all the glory in Christ.—AMEN.

SERMON XCIII.

THE DANGER AND EVIL OF BEING TURNED AWAY FROM THE SIMPLICITY THAT
IS IN CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JAMES THOMSON, DOLLAR AND MUCKART.

"But I fear lest, by any means, even as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."—2 Cor. xi. 3.

THE Gospel is supposed by many to be something very easily understood. No doubt, in the inspired volume, it is very plainly and distinctly revealed. Its leading truths are comparatively few and simple, and, were there no darkness in the human understanding—no evil bias in the human will—no corruption in the human heart—and no tempter without to bewilder and mislead, it would be easily understood. But the very simplicity of the Gospel, the wondrous free grace of God manifested in it, and the evil heart of unbelief—the legal spirit within, and the natural innate enmity to God, and all that is spiritually good, working thereon, conjoined with our natural blindness, and the efforts of the adversary, often bring it about, that men misunderstand it, pervert it, add to it, or detract from it.

But these defective or perverted views of the Gospel are apt to be followed with evil consequences. They often mar the individual's comfort—rob him of his peace and joy—keep him in a state of bondage and fear—retard him in his journey Zionward—and prevent him from availing himself, in the hour of need, of that grace and strength so richly treasured up in Christ Jesus, and in him held forth so freely to all. If so, it cannot be a matter of indifference to us whether we—or a matter of indifference to any right-minded man, whether those around him, and especially those in whom he ought to feel peculiar interest, are labouring under such misconception. Accordingly, we find the apostle in our text expressing himself, in the language of anxiety as to this, in reference to the believers at Corinth. He says, "I fear"—here intimating his anxiety and apprehension; "I fear lest, by any means"—

here contemplating many ways in which the evil may be brought about ; “ as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtilty ”—here adverting, as a memorial of our danger, to the power, the art, and skill of the great adversary, especially as manifested in the temptation and fall of one placed in so much more favourable circumstances than we, and so much better fitted for resisting him ; “ so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ ”—the simple, pure, gospel as it is in Christ—the simple, direct, confiding reliance upon Christ—and the simple, ruling aim to glorify God in him. And, if the inspired penman thus expresses himself in reference to the believers at Corinth, he who threw not away his words at random, but spoke and wrote under the teaching of the Holy Spirit of truth, the evil that he deprecates must be a great evil.

We hope that it may not be without benefit, from the words of our text, to direct your attention,

I. To Satan's temptation of Eve, as a proof of his subtilty and our danger ;

II. To the evil which the apostle fears and deprecates.

I. In the *first* place, then, let us advert to Satan's temptation of Eve, as a proof of his subtilty and our danger.

“ I fear lest, by any means,” says the apostle, “ even as Satan beguiled Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Here, my friends, our attention is directed to a very memorable occurrence—to that event which took place so soon after the work of creation was finished, viz., the temptation of Eve in the garden of Eden. It is an event that has been followed with many melancholy consequences in succeeding times, introducing into this otherwise fair world sorrow, suffering, sin, and death. But while so, it is also an event full of salutary instruction and warning. Let us, then, turn to it. “ Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yes, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden ; but of the fruit of [the] tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die ; for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil : And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.” (Gen. iii. 1-6.)

Here, indeed, we have a striking instance of the subtilty with which Satan works—something that should impress us strongly with a sense of our danger, and of the importance of living near unto God. His subtilty is manifest not merely in one respect, but in many. Let us advert to a few of those things in which it shows itself.

1. And, in the *first* place, we say his subtilty is manifest in his availing himself of the situation and circumstances in which Eve was placed.

And, first, she was alone. This, indeed, is not expressly mentioned in the sacred narrative; and at a hasty perusal, more especially of the concluding part of the sixth verse, it might be supposed to be otherwise. But all that is intimated in the expression, “gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat,” obviously is, that after partaking of the fruit alone and by herself, she then carried of the fruit to him, and he partook of it. The whole narrative implies this. If Adam were near at hand, it is scarcely conceivable that all the circumstances should take place that did occur without her accosting him. Why, here was a marvellous occurrence, well calculated to awaken to the utmost a feeling that makes all communicative, viz.—the feeling of surprise. Here was another of the creatures of God, seemingly endowed with reason and understanding and the faculty of speech, and placed upon a level with man. The statement he makes, “Ye shall not surely die,” was a startling one—a creature setting up his word in opposition to the Word of the God of truth. His promise, again, was as extraordinary—“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” The taking the final step also was a momentous one; and we again say, it is not conceivable that all this could have taken place, and the sin be consummated, without one word of communication on the part of Eve with her husband, if he had stood beside her.

Eve, then, was alone, and here we have a proof of Satan's subtilty. His prospect of success manifestly depended, in a great degree, on his hurrying forward the temptation, giving no time for consideration—no time for weighing everything fully and deliberately—no opportunity for arguing the matter with, and deriving the benefit of the counsel and advice of, one perhaps possessed of more vigour of mind and judgment than herself. His point of advantage, by availing himself of Eve's situation, he secured, and, accordingly, in the end his object was gained.

May we, my friends, learn no important lesson from this? Yes, there is one, and it is this, that in times of temptation we should avail ourselves of the benefit of Christian counsel and advice. When the temptation is brought to bear upon ourselves, we are not always the best judges as to what is duty. Temptation, in such circumstances, in the language of the Apostle James, has a drawing and enticing power. We

view things through a kind of distempered medium. Others not under its influence may see things more calmly and dispassionately; and, in turning it over together in Christian converse, we may be the more likely to discover what is right and what is wrong. There is much truth in the statement of Scripture, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." While, then, you betake yourself first in the time of temptation to him who was in all points tempted like as we are, who can feel for us when we are tempted, and with certainty point out the path of duty; and while you betake yourself to his Word, as that through which, by his spirit, he principally teaches and guides, go also to his people and make them the men of your counsel. Look upon it as the deed of an enemy, who, when self-interest strongly pulls one way, and there is nothing apparently but trials and difficulties in the other, while yet there may be some misgivings that the path of trial is the path of duty, would advise you to surround yourself with everything that could make the decision more difficult, and secluding yourselves from your Christian friends and brethren, to endeavour to come to a decision. In such circumstances, you are in imminent peril. Satan has you at an advantage.

But, further, Eve was not only alone, she was in the situation where temptation was most likely to be successful—she was near the forbidden fruit. This also, indeed, is not expressly mentioned; but there can just be as little doubt as to the fact. There is no intimation given in the sacred narrative that she had to travel to a distance. She apparently had but to lift the eye, and the object of temptation was before her. No sooner had the tempter made the statement, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," than it is added, "and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat."

Eve, then, was near the forbidden fruit; and here also we have a proof of Satan's subtilty. Had she been obliged to travel to a distance, there might have been time for deliberation—time for curiosity to be allayed—time for consultation—time for suspicion to arise—time to get out of the confusion of mind into which she was thrown—time, in short, to change her purpose. But when she was upon the spot, all the concurring causes would operate together; and the very sight of the forbidden fruit would bring new feelings and desires into action, and add fuel to the fire. So it was with Eve, and Eve fell.

May we, my friends, learn no important lesson from this? Yes, there is one, and it is this, to be especially upon our guard when near the object of temptation. It is well to be upon our guard at all times, as Satan is ever busy. No seclusion in the deepest solitude will save from

him. He can enter into our inner man, work upon our imagination, and stir up corruption within us to its lowest depths. But more especially are we in danger, when he not only can assail through the medium of the imagination, but through the medium of our senses, and bring all his varied weapons more fully and directly to bear. Ah, in such circumstances, more deeply impressed with our danger, let us have our eyes directed to him who alone can successfully help or deliver.

2. But, *secondly*, in illustration of Satan's subtilty in his management of the temptation of Eve, we would remark, that it is manifest in the way in which he assailed her, altogether independently of the nature of the temptation itself.

He assailed her through the medium of the serpent. Now, we are told in the beginning of the chapter, "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made, and he said unto the woman," &c. In all probability, the serpent, when originally created, was in some respects different from what it is now. We find in the fourteenth verse of the third chapter, a curse pronounced upon it, "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field, upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." Although in this there is shadowed forth the degradation and ruin of him who had taken possession of the body of the serpent, there is just as little doubt that there is intimated a change upon the form of the creature itself. In all probability its outward appearance formerly was much more attractive than it is now. At all events, it seems originally to have been endowed with a kind of instinctive sagacity, that raised it above the other beasts of the field. Of the body of this animal, Satan appears to have been allowed to take possession, just as he subsequently did of the bodies of men. Now, the point on which we would wish to fix your attention is this, that it was in this form that he did appear and carry on the temptation. For here we have another instance of his subtilty. By thus appearing and accosting Eve, he placed her in circumstances in which she could not so well bring the full powers of her mind to bear upon the temptation. The very fact of the serpent's speaking must have awakened no ordinary surprise and curiosity. Her mind could not be in a calm and composed state. And the remarkable occurrence might only the better prepare her for giving credit to his subsequent statement. He might, no doubt, have assailed her by endeavouring to inject the same suspicions into her mind directly, as he does by the serpent's words, but manifestly not with nearly the same prospect of success.

And does this teach us no important lesson? Yes, it teaches us this,

that Satan is ever more to be dreaded when he speaks to us through the instrumentality of others, than when he operates directly upon the heart. The fall of Eve was brought about through the instrumentality of the serpent, and how was it that he accomplished the fall of Adam? It was through the instrumentality of Eve. And as he acted then, so does he still. He is not, now, indeed, as far as we can judge, permitted to take possession of the bodies of men, and of their organs of speech, and make them utter what he would have them. But both Scripture and experience teach us to believe that he is permitted to exercise great influence over the soul; and very often when the individual is apparently merely expressing his own feelings, he is Satan's blind and unconscious instrument. Peter, no doubt, thought he was but giving utterance to his own feelings when, in reply to our Saviour's statement, in reference to his death, he said, "Far it be from thee Lord." But what are Christ's words? "Get thee behind me Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." When Satan's temptations come in such a way as this, being indirect, they are doubly insidious and doubly dangerous.

3. But, *thirdly*, the subtilty of Satan in the temptation of Eve, is more especially manifest in the nature of the temptation itself, and in the manner in which it is conducted.

The first step of the temptation is laid before us in the beginning of the chapter, where we find the tempter accosting Eve, and saying, "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden." Here Satan's effort seems to be to awaken doubts of God's goodness and truth; well aware that, if he could but accomplish this, his object was nearly gained. And he does proceed in a most insidious manner. You may observe that he endeavours to fasten the mind of Eve upon the only thing that could possibly awaken these doubts, and that was the restriction or prohibition. He does not advert to God's great goodness, as manifest in all his other dealings with our first parents—making them what they were—endowing them with reason and understanding—raising them above all his other creatures in this lower world—making them capable of holding communion with himself—surrounding them with everything that could minister to their gratification, and permitting them to eat, and to eat freely of the fruit of all the other trees in the Garden. No, he carefully refrains from bringing these things prominently forward. This might have defeated his object. He endeavours to fasten her attention upon one thing, and but one, and that was the restriction. Just as if he had said, Is it so? can it be that God hath made this restriction? can he have created the fruit, and placed it before you, given you appetites and desires, and forbidden you to in-

dulge them? The being whom you worship must either be a hard master, or you must be labouring under some strange mistake or delusion.

The manner of commencing their temptation was thus very artful, and yet it is the way in which, in a great majority of instances, Satan still works. If he can but awaken in the mind, by whatever means, doubts of God's goodness and truth, his object is nearly gained. Sometimes he will work through the burden of sin pressing upon the conscience; sometimes through the trials and difficulties in our way; sometimes, again, through present suffering, or our natural craving after things forbidden; and if he can but awaken the doubt or the suspicion, that we are placed in unfavourable circumstances—a separation is made between the creature and the Creator. The creature stands helpless and alone, and the after steps are comparatively easy. Ah, yes, confiding, resting on God and the Saviour, is our safety; doubt and suspicion of him our ruin.

We have seen the line of conduct followed by Satan in the opening of the temptation, let us now look to its results. These are brought before us in the answer of Eve, as given in the second and third verses, and in such words as to shew he had gained his end. "We may eat," she says, "of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Here is a number of things to be noted. Eve does not correctly quote the original permission and threatening. She leaves out the most important expression in the permission, alters an expression in the threatening, and adds a clause to it, all intimating that doubt of God's goodness and truth had already obtained an entrance into her mind. The original permission runs thus, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." How does Eve quote it? "We may eat," she says, "of the fruit of the trees of the garden." God had permitted them to eat of the fruit of every tree but one. "Of every tree, he says, thou mayest eat." From the extensive nature of the grant, so illustrative of his goodness, her attention is turned away. She notes it not. God had permitted them to eat of the fruit of all the trees but one, to the full gratification of their wayward inclinations. "Of every tree of the garden, he says, thou mayest *freely* eat." From that also her attention is turned away; and all that she now contemplates in the original grant is a vague, general permission, affording no proof of goodness or of kindly feeling on the part of the great Creator towards his creatures. The original threatening again runs thus—"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in

in our text, "fear, lest, even as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtilty, so our minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

II. This, however, leads us, as was proposed, to consider, in the *second* place, the evil which the apostle fears and deprecates.

The evil which the apostle fears and deprecates is, in his own words, "lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." These words may be regarded as implying three things—the fear of the apostle lest their minds should be corrupted or turned away from, 1st, the simple, pure gospel as it is in Christ; 2d, the simple, direct, confiding reliance on Christ; 3d, the simple, ruling aim to glorify God in Christ.

It is difficult to say in which of these senses the apostle meant himself to be understood, or whether he meant to include them all. As, however, the subtilty of Satan is manifest in reference to them all, and as it is an evil to have our mind corrupted or turned away from any of them, we shall take the more comprehensive view, and, in regard to each of them, offer some illustration of the evil which the apostle may be regarded as contemplating with apprehension,

1st, The first evil, then, which the apostle, in our text, may be regarded as fearing and deprecating is, lest our minds be corrupted or turned away from the simple, pure gospel, that is in Christ.

As we have already remarked in the preceding part of this discourse, the gospel, in the inspired volume, is very plainly and distinctly revealed, and its great truths are comparatively few and simple. The gospel, indeed, may be regarded mainly as implied or included in the great gospel offer. The Lord God in the riches of his mercy and compassion, is holding forth to you and to me, altogether independently of any thing that we are, have done, or attained to—freely holding forth to us, simply as sinners of the human race, the Saviour, and all the blessings of his purchase; a free and full forgiveness—a perfect righteousness to cover us—the Holy Spirit to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort us—to work all our works in us—all grace here and glory hereafter. All that we have to do is, to stretch forth the hand of faith and take. There are no previous conditions to be performed by us—nothing attained to, to render us deserving—no qualifications to recommend us. Free in Christ are held forth all spiritual blessings; all free—free as the air that we breathe, or the water that we drink. *That* is the gospel. It is apparently simple, intelligible, and it is plainly revealed. Its truths are wondrous—precious; such as should be welcomed with shouts of gladness by the fallen, degraded, helpless, perishing sons of Adam. And yet, how few understand it, believe it?

How many pervert it, add to it, or detract from it, clog and fetter it? and how seldom is it that even believers themselves see it and realize it in all its truth and simplicity as the glorious gospel of the blessed God? The Apostle had preached it at Corinth—preached it, perhaps, in such a way as no other man ever did; and yet he speaks of Christ crucified being to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness—speaks as if some of the believers, in some respects, were turned away from it, as well as alienated from him—and expresses his fear, lest, through the subtilty of the tempter, this should be the case with many, and so has it been in all ages. How do we find the Prophet exclaiming—“Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” How do we find him expostulating with men upon their folly and sin in seeking for happiness and peace in everything else rather than in Christ, saying, “Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness?” And, even still, how often do we find men talking of sincere obedience being the terms of life, or perversely mingling our doings with the doings of Christ as the procuring cause of pardon and acceptance—or of our sins being so numerous and aggravated, and we so vile, that it is in vain for us to attempt to come? From whence does all this proceed but from having the mind corrupted or turned away from the simple, pure gospel, as it is in Christ? No, my friends, there are no conditions but of man’s devising—no prerequisites in the way of recommendation, but of man’s imagining—no obstacle in the sinner’s way, but of man’s erection. The path is open, the blessings free. Ah, it would be well for you if you could but fully believe this, and realise it, that God will do all things for you, and work all your works in you, if, renouncing every other hope, you will but flee to the Lord Jesus Christ, cast yourselves helplessly upon him, and study to live the life of union with him—that he will awaken in you right feelings, implant within you right desires, open the eyes of your understanding, strengthen and increase your love, and make the means of grace precious channels in which his grace may flow.

Well aware of the importance to the child of God of these clear and realizing views of the gospel, Satan is ever active in his efforts to mislead, to blind, or to obscure. The Apostle knew this well. For, what is our text but a strong warning on his part as to the efforts of the adversary? It is not a small thing that could lead him, writing under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to express himself in the language of apprehension and fear. And if you would wish for further confirmation of it, you may turn to the fourth chapter of this same epistle, where he says, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to

them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." Ah! be then upon your guard. Bear in mind that you have such an adversary, not the less to be dreaded because unseen. And while you read the inspired volume, have your eyes directed toward him who can save you from all Satan's delusions, and bring you to the saving knowledge of the truth.

2dly, But, secondly, another evil which the Apostle may be regarded as fearing and deprecating is, lest our minds should be corrupted or turned away from the simple, direct, confiding reliance upon Christ.

The simple, pure gospel, as it is in Christ, we have already stated to consist mainly in the great gospel offer to us as sinners of the human race, freely, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase. Saving faith is just the acting upon this, believing it to be true—viz., the receiving and resting upon Him for all our salvation, as he is thus held forth. This it is our duty to do. Are we burdened with a sense of guilt—do our past sins rise up in remembrance before us—and do we look with anxiety to the future? It is our duty to welcome the Lord Jesus Christ, and, having confidence in its efficacy, to wash ourselves in his precious blood. Do we feel that we are unrighteous—have nothing of our own to commend us—nothing to satisfy the demands of God's law? It is our duty to welcome the Lord Jesus Christ, and confidingly to take refuge under the covert of his righteousness. Are we in perplexity as to what is duty, or as to what we should believe as well as do? We are called upon to welcome the Lord Jesus Christ, and confidingly to seek in his word, and through his Spirit to ascertain, what is truth, or the way in which we should go. Do we feel our heart to be hard—evil feelings and desires in a state of activity, calling loudly for gratification? It is our duty still to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to cast ourselves confidingly on him for quickening, for mortifying grace, and strength. Or do our spiritual enemies assail—and do we find ourselves to be possessed of an infant's feebleness—helpless in their hands who are ready to hurry us we know not whither? It is our duty still to stay ourselves upon the Rock of Ages, and, confidingly leaning on him, to resist them stedfast in the faith.

This is our duty, and it is our interest. He who hath tried it and done it, knows it. He who hath bathed himself in Emmanuel's blood, knows that it can remove every stain, impart blessed peace to the conscience, and give hope and confidence in God. He who, in the hour of felt helplessness and need, hath confidingly cast himself over upon him, knows the blessedness of heaven-born strength—the glad feeling of freedom from anxiety and apprehended danger. He who, amid the

uprising of indwelling corruption, and the distressing experience that he has a traitor within his bosom, is enabled yet to cast himself confidently upon him; while with grief he may be brought to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" yet, with somewhat of relief and even buoyancy of spirit, may be enabled to rejoin, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord." And he who, in preparing to take the last step from time into eternity, to meet the very king of terrors, is enabled confidently to lean on that Saviour, realizing his power and faithfulness, even then may take up the song of triumph, and say, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

But blessed as are thus the results that flow from the simple, direct, confiding reliance upon Christ, our minds, through the subtilty of Satan, are very apt to be corrupted or turned away from it. The adversary is busy, and only too often succeeds. Many are the ways in which he works. At times, he will endeavour to fasten the individual's attention upon his past life, and suggest that your sins have been too many and too aggravated. Too long have you stood out against the calls and invitations of the Gospel, stifled your convictions, and resisted the Spirit. Whatever may be the case with others, there is no hope for you. You have no warrant to flee, no warrant to confide. Away with the delusions of the devil. As a sinner, you have no warrant. He seeks to mislead you to your soul's undoing. At times, he will endeavour to fasten the individual's attention upon what is within him, and suggest that your heart is too hard—it is hopeless to expect that your heart can be changed, and that from such a state of bondage you can be set free. Away with such delusion. He who formed the heart of man can change it. What can go beyond this, "He is able to save to the very uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." At times, he will endeavour to fasten the individual's attention upon the powers and capacities which God has given him, and suggest that these have not been given in vain—that you have only strenuously and actively to put them forth, and, in whole or in part, you will render yourself worthy, will be enabled to resist your enemies, and advance yourself in personal holiness; there is no need for resting simply and solely upon Christ's work, and making it all your plea. Away with such delusion. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" "By the deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified." Who may gainsay the statement of the Master, "Without me, ye can do nothing?" At times, he will endeavour to fasten the individual's attention upon what is without him—upon the many difficulties in his way—the sacrifices he must make—the self-de-

nial he must exert—and the sinful pleasures he must forsake—and will suggest, “Is it possible that you can be carried through these difficulties? make these sacrifices? exercise that self-denial? and be enabled to forego these gratifications? You may make the effort for a time, but you will fail.” Away, again we say, with such delusions. Who was it that enabled the worthies, in olden time, to do and bear all that they did and suffered?—that nerved them to endure “the torture, not accepting deliverance”—that carried them cheerfully through “trials of cruel mockings, and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments”—was with them when they were “stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword?” Is his strength diminished? Is his compassion gone? Has his watchful care ceased, and does he no longer sympathise with the afflicted and suffering members of his body? Ah! no; he is still the same, able to bear them through all—to carry them above all—to bring them off more than conquerors. Or, at times, he will endeavour to fasten the individual’s attention upon his spiritual enemies—their number, their power, their subtilty, their unwearied activity—and will suggest, “Ah! how art thou to be enabled to resist them? They triumphed over man in his original state. Who among the holiest and best, but, in their backslidings, sins, and falls, have attested his power? And how art thou, poor, unstable, wavering, halting worm, to be able to triumph over him?” Away, again we say, with such delusions. Great in might is the lion of the tribe of Judah, who can stand before Him? In the days of his flesh, he had but to speak the word, and, though in number as a legion, they were forced at once to obey; and now that he is on the right hand of power, who can triumph over those whom he wills to save?

3dly, A third evil the Apostle in our text may be regarded as fearing and deprecating is, the having the mind corrupted or turned away from the simple, ruling aim, of glorifying God in Christ.

Man was not made for himself alone. The Lord has no doubt found him capable of extracting enjoyment from many things around him, and has surrounded him with many things from which that enjoyment may be extracted; and he may lawfully and thankfully use God’s creatures. But this was not the great object for which he was created. No! he was made for a higher and nobler end, even for the furtherance of God’s glory. Man’s chief end, we are told in our Shorter Catechism, is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever. And in accordance with this, the Apostle, guided by the Holy Spirit, writes, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” This was the great object or end for which man was made, and therefore it ever ought to be his simple, ruling aim.

It is man’s duty to glorify God, and it is his interest. The Christia-

serves a gracious Master ; and just in proportion as the servant seeks to promote the master's interests, may he with safety leave it to the master to look after the servant's comfort. In confirmation of this, how many precious promises do we find in the inspired volume, coupled with faithful walking in the path of duty ? " He," says the Saviour, " that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." " If ye continue in my word," he again says, " then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And again, it is his gracious declaration, " Take up my yoke and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

But, alas, how little are men in general thus actuated ? How do we find Satan by his subtilty leading them to feel and act otherwise. The world is arrayed by him in the most attractive colours. The apparent good which the individual may lose by having the single eye to God's glory is magnified, and the evils that may ensue seem the greater. He avails himself of the indistinctness of the outline that at times separates proper attention to the duties of our calling, and proper care of the gifts of the Lord's bounty, from undue keenness of pursuit after, and undue prizing of, the creatures, and in the great majority of instances he leads men far beyond the proper bounds. Instead of God standing first, and self occupying a far subordinate room, self is exalted to the throne, and the living God is made to stand next, if his glory indeed be regarded at all.

Ah, my friends, let not this be the case with us. It is idolatry, although we do not form the image with our hands, and bend the knee, and visibly worship it. It is idolatry, and who thus acting can expect things should thrive with him spiritually, or that grace, mercy, and peace should abound toward him ? Ah no, if we would wish to know the peace, the joy, the assured hope God at times gives his people to experience, we must put away our idols—cast from us that Achan in the camp, that otherwise will trouble the host of Israel. Let us have it written deep upon our inmost soul that we are his—his by creation—his creatures—his property ; that we are his by providence, nourished, fed, protected, kept by his hand ; and, if interested in the work of his Son, doubly his—bound by the strongest obligation under which a creature can be laid, to live no longer unto ourselves, but unto him. Ah, yea, let the statement of holy writ be imprinted in our memory, " Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are his.—AMEN.

SERMON XCIV.

A DIVINE CALL INDISPENSABLE TO THE SUCCESS OF A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

BY THE REV. W. B. CLARK, MAXWELTOWN.

"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."
—JEREMIAH xxiii. 21-22.

Preached at the Opening of the Free Synod of Dumfries, on Tuesday 31st October 1845.)

THE prophetic office, as exercised in the Jewish Church, bore a much closer resemblance than did the priestly to the ministerial office, as exercised among ourselves at the present day; so that Christian ministers may be regarded rather as the successors of the ancient prophets than of the Aaronic priests. No doubt there are some respects in which there was a vast difference between the ancient prophets and the existing ministers of the Gospel. The prophets who are so named in the higher sense of the term, were directly called by God, sometimes commissioned for a particular purpose, and above all, endowed both with the power of working miracles, and predicting future events. But we have no reason to believe that the main body of those who, in Scripture, are termed prophets, were endowed with these powers. We read of schools of the prophets, which were generally, if not always, presided over by a truly inspired prophet, who seems commonly to have lived with them in a sort of college or community. Here we have every reason to believe that these young men were instructed in the principles of religion and interpretation of Scripture, and trained to conduct the public worship of God. We cannot, however, for a moment suppose, that they could, by any human process, be trained to work miracles, or predict future events. But there is every reason to believe that it was usually, though not always, from the men trained in these schools, that God selected those whom he endowed with miraculous powers. Amos, whom God took as he followed the flock, seems to have looked upon his call as rather an uncommon case, and he urges this as a reason for continuing faithful to his commission. Thus, when Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, urged him to prophesy no more there, because it was the king's

chapel and the king's court, Amos replied, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son, but I was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.

It appears that large numbers of young men were trained in these schools. We know that at Jericho the sons of the prophets numbered at least fifty men, whilst at Gilgal, and probably at the very same time too, there were one hundred. Even these two schools alone must have soon furnished the country with a large supply of prophets. That there were large numbers of prophets in Israel, is further evident from the fact, that, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took an hundred, and hid them by fifty in a cave. The question then very naturally arises, how were such numbers of prophets employed, when we read of only a few who were prophets in the restricted sense in which the word is now usually employed? It is impossible to answer this question satisfactorily, but it seems exceedingly probable that they were employed, to a certain extent, in instructing the people, and conducting public worship in places at a distance from the temple, in a manner somewhat similar to the synagogue worship of after times. This opinion derives considerable support from the answer given to her by the Shunemite's husband, when she requested him to send one of the young men, and one of the asses, that she might run to the man of God. And he said, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon nor Sabbath?" (2 Kings iv. 23.) At which times, it would seem that Elisha himself, or some of the sons of the prophets, conducted public worship. That the prophetic office, in many respects, closely resembled that of ministers of the gospel, is still farther evident from the nature of many of the prophetic discourses recorded in Scripture, which possess the chief characteristics of sermons, and contain pointed exposures of prevailing iniquities, earnest appeals to the conscience, pressing calls to repentance, and awful denunciations of God's judgments, in case of the people's obstinate perseverance in sin. This view of the subject is corroborated by the use of the word *prophecy*, as employed in the New Testament, where it sometimes implies something very similar to, if not identical with, what we mean by the term *preach*. Thus, in 1 Cor. xiv. 3, it is said, "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

If this view of the subject be correct, then it is clear that ministers of the gospel may with propriety be referred to many statements in the Old Testament regarding the prophets, for warning and reproof, direction and encouragement; and to a man trembling at the thought that he may have entered upon the ministerial office without a sufficient warrant, I know no passage so pregnant with direction and encourage-

ment as that which has been chosen as the subject of our present discourse.

In discoursing farther from these words, fathers and brethren, I purpose, in humble dependence on divine assistance, to direct your attention, in the first place, to the generally admitted truth that a divine call is necessary to warrant any man in taking upon himself the ministerial office. In the second place, to what almost follows from this as a necessary consequence, that the man who intrudes into the ministerial office without a proper call has no right to expect the divine blessing upon his labours, whilst he is uncalled and unsent. And, in the third place, let us consider the truth contained in the text, which to many must be an encouraging one, that though a person may have ventured into the sacred ministry without a proper call, there seems to be here a hope held out that, if he is faithful in the discharge of ministerial duty, God may favour him with a call, and ultimately render his labours eminently successful.

I. First, then, let us direct our attention for a little to the generally admitted truth that a divine call is necessary to warrant any man in taking upon himself the ministerial office. The reasonableness of this proposition is very obvious. In a matter which so nearly concerns the honour of God's name and the interest of his church, as the appointment of his own servants, it would be strange if he suffered his rights to be interfered with, or permitted any one to enter really upon the work of his ministry, without a warrant from himself to do so. Men may, indeed, from worldly motives, aspire to this office, and the outward badge may be conferred upon them by fallible men like themselves; but God will give no man the inward and indispensable qualifications, except those whom he has himself chosen and sent.

This is a truth which is generally received among the people of God, though there may be a difference of opinion as to what constitutes a divine call, and the means of ascertaining its reality. Under the Christian dispensation, I do not think we have any right, in ordinary circumstances, to expect a direct or special call addressed to us by the Spirit of God; but a person looking towards the ministry may, in the exercise of prayer and patient enquiry, discover what is the divine will in reference to this matter, with sufficient certainty, for his own practical direction. There are three points in regard to which it is generally admitted among intelligent Christians that such a person ought to be satisfied. First, he ought to be satisfied that, in making his decision, he is not swayed by worldly motives, and should examine himself strictly as to the singleness of his aim, and earnestness of his desire, to promote

God's glory and the good of souls. This is obviously the chief thing in regard to which a man should examine himself; and if he feel an ardent impelling desire to devote himself to the service of God in the ministry of his Son, without being swayed by worldly motives, this may be regarded as a strong presumption that it is God's will that he should engage in the work of the ministry. But as there may exist this desire on our part, when there is no call on God's, there is a second necessary point in regard to which we must be satisfied, viz., our fitness for the work; and this is a matter which must be determined not by ourselves, but by the proper authorities of the Church. If an individual, really wishing to know God's will in reference to this matter, and to be guided entirely by it, take the proper means of earnest prayer for divine direction and patient self-examination; and if the examining ministers faithfully perform their duty, there is little danger of his mistaking the divine will. But there is still another security against error in reference to this matter; for we must, in the third place, clearly see a way open in Providence for our approach to the ministerial office; and I can conceive that, not only may a man be satisfied as to the two first points, but his way may be so hedged up, that his vocation may be as clear as if a voice were to address him from heaven upon the subject. But even when the indications of the divine will are not so clear and decisive, if a person long earnestly to be employed in the work of the ministry, and is not conscious of being swayed by secular interests, if he is thought to be possessed of the requisite qualifications by the proper office-bearers of the church, and no obstacle in Providence present itself, he may war-
rantably venture to present himself as a candidate for the gospel ministry; and when an outward call to active duty is clear, he may in these circumstances, we think, confidently expect the divine blessing and support.

From all this it is plain that no one should present himself either for license or ordination, unless he has good grounds, upon strict self-examination, and careful watching of the indications of Providence, to believe that he has really a vocation to the work of the ministry. And it is equally plain that no presbytery is justified in licensing or ordaining a candidate for the ministerial office till they have good grounds to believe that he has obtained such a call; and they are not faithful to the trust committed to them, if they grant their commission to any one till they have sought and obtained something like satisfaction on this fundamental point. Few things have tended more to the injury of the Church of Christ than the remissness of its office-bearers in enquiring into the spiritual state and motives of candidates for the ministry; and if ever we would see our church spiritually in a flourishing condition,

ministers must be conscientious, prayerful, and searching, in their dealings with young men in reference to these matters.

II. I come now, as was proposed in the second place, to consider the truth which follows from this as a necessary consequence—that the man who intrudes into the ministerial office without a proper call, has no right to expect the divine blessing upon his labours, whilst he is uncalled and unsent.

It is not denied that God may, in the exercise of his sovereign pleasure, employ the tongue of an unconverted man to convey saving truth to the soul, just as he did that of Balaam to communicate the most glorious truths for the benefit of the church in all ages. Still this does not invalidate the general truth, that conversion is indispensable to ministerial success. Unto the wicked, God saith, “What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?” Unless a man be impressed with divine truth himself, there is little likelihood that he will be able to impress others; and I believe that, just in proportion as any one is filled with the Spirit of God himself, will he be made the instrument of communicating his blessed influences to others. But genuine conversion to God, though indispensable, is not enough; for, in the army of the living God, as in every other, the officers must always bear a small proportion to the men. And let us never forget God’s own words in reference to this subject—“I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore, they shall not profit this people at all.”

Persons who have been converted at a comparatively late period of life, in the ardour of their first love and overwhelming sense of the infinite importance of divine things, not unfrequently desire to abandon their secular profession, and devote themselves to the work of the ministry, without sufficiently considering whether they have a divine call to that work. In most cases, we believe that such a proposal is injudicious, and that a man may generally serve his Divine Master best in the particular sphere in which Providence has cast his lot. In every rank of life, the salt of converted men is necessary, and a private Christian may labour most successfully for Christ without being suspected of mercenary motives. But, as God chose Amos from the sheepfold, and John Bunyan from the tinker’s shop, he may still call men from any occupation, and at any period of life, and internally qualify and commission them for his work; and if we see such individuals testifying the reality of their commission by the rich fruits of their labours, instead of saying, “My Lord Moses, forbid them,” how much more consistent with the spirit of our Master were it to say, “Would

God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them !" Numb. xi. 29.

But the evil from which the church has suffered most, is that of parents training their sons to the ministry just as they would to any other profession, that they may thus obtain a genteel and comfortable livelihood. In such cases, piety is little thought of, and the necessity of a divine call unknown or disregarded, and secular interests almost exclusively are taken into account. This is totally a different thing from pious parents devoting a child to the service of God, as did Hannah—a child of many prayers—a child, it may be, given in answer to prayer. With these feelings, it is commendable to train children for the service of the Lord, but not to thrust them into it, and to keep them in a waiting attitude, that, if God, by his Spirit or providence, should be asking, Whom shall I send, and who will go for me? they may be ready in all humility to say, Here am I, send me.

There are few things more absurd and thoroughly inconsistent with every principle of propriety, than the grounds on which young men have too often been appointed to the holy ministry. How often have we known young men licensed to preach the gospel, merely because they had attended the requisite number of years at college, and were able to undergo an examination, often a very superficial one, on the prescribed subjects of study, whilst decisive evidences of personal religion were neither sought nor given; and then ordained as ministers of Christ upon being presented to a living by a patron, who, perhaps, had little interest in the parish, and still less in the cause of vital godliness?

How deplorable that a youth inexperienced in the Christian warfare should be appointed to lead the hosts of the Lord! What but defeat can be expected from such an arrangement? How deplorable that a person should be ordained to rouse and watch over the souls of others, who never felt any concern for his own; that one should be appointed to deal with persons labouring under the convictions of an awakened conscience, who is altogether ignorant of the matter, and to point out the way of salvation to others when he knows it only by hearsay himself! How absurd that a person unacquainted with the wiles of Satan, should be set to put others on their guard against them; and that one unacquainted with the trials, difficulties, and perplexities of the divine life should be appointed to minister to souls in earnest about religion, and, it may be, in distress about their spiritual condition! Ah, when the blind are set to lead the blind, what is to be expected but that both should fall into the ditch together? Literature and philosophy are good, and very highly to be prized as the handmaids of religion, but it is woefully to be deplored when they are made substitutes for it. And,

let it be remembered, that, however valuable, they are not essential and indispensable to the Christian minister, whereas experimental religion is. And, if these cannot both be had, let us take the deeply exercised and experienced, though unlettered Christian; but away with the self-called, man-appointed, and merely man-taught minister, who has nothing to recommend him but the enticing words of man's wisdom, and the not-soul-profitng lessons of an earth-born morality.

It is only a converted and divinely-called ministry, whose labours God can be expected to own and render profitable to his church. However profound the intellect and acute the discrimination, and splendid the eloquence of a mere man-taught preacher, though he may gratify the itching ears of his audience, and excite their admiration of himself, so far as the grand ends of preaching are concerned, he is like a man beating the air. It is not a brilliant oration that can rouse a sleeping conscience, though it may rock it into still deeper slumber. It is the Spirit of God only that can give efficacy to the words of man, and carry them home with overwhelming power to the heart; and we have every reason to believe, that this divine energy will not accompany the words of those whom God has not sent. Hence it matters little how numerous may be the professed preachers of the gospel in a country; for, if God has not sent them, they will not profit his people at all.

It is not the elegant sermon, but simple truth which the Spirit employs for alarming the conscience and breaking the hard-heart. And when the sinner is awakened, and in earnest about religion, he cannot bear the trifling of a showy rhetoric; but that is to him the most acceptable sermon which leads him most plainly and directly to Christ; for when the heart is broken by a sense of sin, it is only the balm of Gilead, applied by the Great Physician, that can give relief.

If then, fathers and brethren, this be so, how solemn the obligation which lies on us, as the keepers of God's vineyard, to make the personal religion of candidates for the ministry the first and chief object of our prayerful investigation! Without in the slightest degree lowering the literary and intellectual standard, yea, if possible, rather elevating it, still it ought to be our chief solicitude to ascertain the spiritual condition of our young men, and to stir them up to enquire into the grounds which they have for believing that God in his providence has called them to the ministry of his Son.

III. Let us now, as was proposed in the third place, proceed to consider the truth contained in the text, which to many must be an encouraging one, that though a person may have entered into the sacred ministry without a proper call, there is here a hope held out, that if he

is faithful in the discharge of ministerial duty, God may favour him with a call, and render his labours at last eminently successful.

I believe there are few men of spiritual discernment, who have been in the way of mingling much in clerical society, upon whom the painful conviction has not been forced, that there are many in the sacred office who have embraced it merely as a trade, and who, far from exemplifying the beauty of holiness in their whole deportment, furnish too decisive evidence of their want of conversion to God. And this, I believe, is the grand secret of the want of ministerial success, of which we hear so many complaints. When we think of the extraordinary achievements of some faithful servants of the Lord—that thousands have been known to be converted by the labours of a single man; and then, when we consider the abundant supply of ministers throughout these lands, and the spiritual desolation which prevails notwithstanding, it can scarcely be deemed a want of charity to suppose, that the services of vast numbers are productive of little or no good. For more than two hundred years, there has been a ministerial agency employed in Britain, which, in point of numbers, would, with God's blessing, have been sufficient to convert the moral wilderness into the garden of the Lord; and yet matters are confessedly in a most deplorable condition. When, therefore, we know what may be done by even a few faithful labourers, the present state of society demonstrates the inefficiency of the great body of those who bear the ministerial name.

It may be said that the extraordinary success of a few eminent men is to be ascribed entirely to their supereminent abilities. But this is not the Scriptural explanation of the matter:—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." No doubt the earnestness and devotedness of these holy men kindled their talents and stimulated them to extraordinary diligence in the cultivation of them; but it was through the accompanying energy of the Spirit of God that their labours were crowned with such extraordinary success. When a man feels the weight of souls upon his heart, this will rouse every energy of his mind, and impart a reality and vigour to his ministrations, which the brightest splendour of unsanctified talents can never equal. When a man is himself filled with the Spirit of God, he will, to a certainty be made the means of conveying the water of life to others. "He that believeth on me," declared Jesus himself, "as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." It is clear, therefore, that, in the case of a converted ministry, success will be the rule, and the want of success the exception.

Fathers and Brethren, I know not whether any of you, from the
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coldness of your devotional feelings, the absence of a sufficiently weighty sense of the tremendous responsibility of the ministerial office, and the small measure of your success, have ever been led to fear that you had run without being sent, or even to question the reality of your own conversion. I can only say that my own mind has sometimes been painfully exercised on these subjects. And to a person agitated with such fears I know of nothing calculated to impart such comfort and encouragement as the promise of the text, "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."

It would seem from these words, that, even though a person do enter the ministerial office from improper motives, and without a divine call, yet, if he act according to the instructions of God's Word, and apply it for the regulation of his own heart and conduct, and be diligent and faithful in the performance of ministerial duty, he will be caught by the truth with which he is brought into contact, and converted and commissioned by God, and made to see the divine pleasure prospering in his hand. This is certainly a perilous experiment for any man to make, but there are undoubted instances on record of unconverted men intruding into the ministerial office from secular motives, whose presumption has been pardoned, whose souls have been converted, whose official appointment has been recognised of God, and whose labours have ultimately been abundantly blessed. Brethren, are there any such here? Let this consideration comfort and encourage us—let it stimulate us to more patient and earnest waiting on God in prayer, to greater anxiety to conform to his will in all things, and more perfect willingness to spend and be spent in his service.

Are we really ambassadors for Christ? What need is there for vigorous exertions at this important crisis. It ought to be gratefully acknowledged that the cause of truth is advancing, but it may be questioned whether it is keeping pace with the progress of error. Men's minds are awakened from the apathy about religion in which they were so long sunk, and there is a spirit of earnestness abroad that will not tolerate lukewarmness on any subject; but it has taken possession of the advocates of error, as well as of the friends of truth. When we calculate the numerical strength, the worldly resources and unscrupulous practices of the various hosts that are marshalled against us, we might well be alarmed for the safety of pure religion, even though assured that it is supported by the power of truth, did we not know that it is backed by the arm of Omnipotence. But with this assurance alone we

need fear no evil ; for we may be satisfied that, if we are true to our God, he will be faithful to us. Yea, if the ministers of a pure gospel stand in the counsel of the Lord, and cause his people to hear his words, they will not only be enabled to maintain their ground, but to bear the banner of truth triumphant through the world.

Beloved fathers and brethren, from the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed, God has given us extraordinary opportunities of usefulness, and correspondingly great results will be exacted from us. He has opened to us a great door and effectual, and great will be our guilt, if we neglect to go in and occupy. He has given us a large measure of acceptance and favour with many people, and woe be to us if we belie the opinions which have been formed. We are still in the midst of a precious harvest season, and if we are not diligent in reaping and gathering in, a similar opportunity may never occur. And be assured of this, that nothing will enable us to *secure* the advantage which we have already gained but the spiritual success of our labours. Nothing will keep our people permanently together but the progress of a work of conversion among them ; and nothing will enable us to advance our cause but the mighty operation of a living gospel upon the hearts of the people. O what need of intimate and very frequent communion with God, that our graces may be kept in lively exercise, that, when we mingle with our people, coming fresh from the ivory palaces, all our garments may smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia ; that, being constantly conversant with spiritual things, and having our affections placed upon them, an habitual solemnity may pervade our conduct, so that it may be no effort for us, wherever we go, always to bear in mind that we are the servants of the Lord Jesus. Ah, were we thus always to act, how should our private conduct illustrate and enforce our public services ! Beloved fathers and brethren, though powerful and affectionate preaching is necessary, it is not enough ; for solemn impressions may be weakened, if not neutralized, by thoughtlessness or levity in the private conduct of the minister ; respect for his character may be almost extinguished, and then what will the possession of the most splendid gifts avail ? If not accompanied with consistency of character, in point of spiritual efficacy, they will be no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. The Lord grant that we may scrupulously avoid everything which might lower our character and impair our usefulness. May it be our earnest prayer and zealous endeavour that we may exhibit in our whole deportment an exemplification of the graces of the Gospel, and be living epistles in behalf of Christianity, known and read of all men. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the

dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever-
AMEN."

SERMON XCV.

EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE.

BY THE REV. JOHN ISDALE, INVERTIEL.

"Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."—LUKE vii. 47.

IN Eastern countries, and among the Jews, it was customary for the rich to give sumptuous feasts, at which even the poorest classes of people were allowed to be present. And hence the circumstance is explained of the poor sinner-woman, who is introduced to us in the text, having gained admittance into the presence of Christ, while he was the guest of a proud and wealthy Pharisee.

On that occasion, as we learn from the narrative, there met in the Pharisee's house three persons, differing widely from each other in their characters. And this very day and in this very house, I make no doubt but that the same three, or one of them, and the representatives of the other two, have met together.

The first of them was called the friend of sinners—a man whose whole demeanour seemed to say, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Now, this man the scribes and Pharisees would fain have made an administrator of the bloody law of Moses. But in the offer of himself which he makes to sinners, it is not as a judge, or a law-giver, or an avenger, but as a Saviour and a Prince of Peace; for he has said, "I came not to condemn the world, but that the world by me might be saved." The second was the Pharisee himself, representing the pride and self-righteousness of man. You see with what formal politeness he invited Jesus to his house. And I make no doubt but that the entertainment he served up was in many respects worthy of the illustrious occasion. Yet there was wanting in it one kind of seasoning, without which the most costly dishes will taste but poorly. The Pharisee bore Jesus no love. For, where is the water to wash his Saviour's feet? Where is the warm kiss of welcome? Where is the oil, as a mark of honour, to anoint his Saviour's head? The third person was a woman of a mean and abandoned appearance, who, with trembling steps, approached Christ, "She stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of

her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." How strong was the principle that thus drew her to her Saviour's feet ! She did not speak ; for her feelings had no language but of deeds. Yet, through those big round tears and burning kisses, there shone forth a principle in her soul which many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown. And that principle, as you may all understand, was love—the love of a sinner forgiven—the love of a prodigal child reconciled.

Such being the two persons, so different in their characters, who on this occasion are brought into contact with the Saviour, it must be interesting to observe their conduct towards him, and to examine into the principles whence it originated. Did the Pharisee admire the condescension and compassion of the Saviour in receiving with tenderness the penitent sinner ? No. " This man," he reasoned within himself, " if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him : for she is a sinner." And, because she was a sinner, he would have had the Saviour to have spurned her from him. Now, the ground upon which he would have recommended such treatment of the sinner-woman lies deeper than the surface of the narrative. It was a favourite dogma with the sect to which he belonged, that, by the obedience they rendered the law of Moses, would they be justified in the sight of God ; while that those whom they styled publicans and sinners, were for ever shut out from the divine favour. Had this principle, from which the Pharisee reasoned, been a sound one, the conclusion to which he came, that if Christ could, with prophetic eye, have penetrated into the heart and read the character of the woman who approached him, he would have spurned her from him—would have been just and irrefragable. And hence, you may observe, our Saviour, in his reply, sets himself to overturn not so much the conclusion as the first principle of the Pharisee's reasoning. He aims rather at vindicating the divine administration in forgiving sinners, than at proving his own claim to be a prophet from God. But if the sinner, upon the Pharisee's principle, is made an outcast from grace, upon what footing does the Pharisee himself stand before his Maker ? Not assuredly upon that of being a penitent sinner ; but rather with the self-righteous prayer in his mouth—" Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are ; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess." And hence we may understand why it was that he bore the Saviour no love. Why should he ? Trusting to his own righteousness, he did not know that he owed anything to a Saviour. If he was not sick, what peculiar respect could the physician claim ? If he was not a sinner, what was the Saviour to him more than any other man ? You must convince him first how much he has been forgiven, before you can get him to love much.

The sinner-woman—(and her conversion had evidently been of a date previous to this meeting ; as we learn, first, from its being said of her, in the 37th verse, that “when she *knew* that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster box of ointment”—an expression implying that the interview with him on this occasion was not accidental, but premeditated and sought for, upon her part ; and, secondly, from the testimony which the Saviour bore to the principle by which she was actuated in her conduct. “She loved much,” was his testimony. And we know that love follows after, does not go before, conversion ; and that, wherever the fruits of love appear, its roots must have been previously planted in the soil of a converted heart)—The sinner-woman knew what the Pharisee did not, that she had been forgiven much. And hence, behold her performing those offices of love which he had neglected. “Seest thou this woman ?” said Christ to Simon. “Thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she hath washed my feet with tears out of the fountain of a penitent heart. Thou gavest me no kiss ; but she (so strong is her love and so deep her humility) esteems it her highest privilege to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman, loving not father or mother, children or brethren, houses or lands, yea, or her own life, so much as her Saviour, hath dedicated to my honour her most precious ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

These two opposite characters pourtrayed in the narrative, of which the text forms a part, we find embodied in the life of one man who acted a prominent part in the apostolic age. Saul, the persecutor, is the Pharisee ; Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, is the penitent sinner. “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more,” is the language of Saul the persecutor. “Circumcised, the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Here is self-righteousness in the most imposing form it could assume. Let us view this proud Pharisee, as he might have been seen of old, pacing the court of the temple, his broad-hemmed robes sweeping the ground, and his eye beaming with the sanctity of the wide phylactery that consecrates his brow ; or let us hearken to his prayer, as he may often have been heard of old, “God I thank thee that I am not as other men are ;” and we discover in him a man who would have shut the door of grace against every wanderer from the path of pharisaical righteousness. But what is the language of Paul the servant of Jesus Christ ? “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for

Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of Jesus Christ my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ ; and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." This is the language of one who loved much because he had been forgiven much. Like the sinner-woman, (or rather, I should say, like all, of every age, who have tasted and seen that the Lord has been gracious to their souls), he brings tears, kisses, precious ointments, yea, and all he has, as offerings to him who loved his soul, and gave himself for it.

"I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," is the declaration of the Apostle Paul. The Pharisee, without being conscious of the condemnation which the law pronounced upon him, was alive in the confidence that, by his own righteousness, he would be justified ; whereas, to the sinner-woman's conscience, the law having come home in its spirituality and power, she died to all trust in herself, and was led, as by a schoolmaster, to the cross of Christ.

Having thus considered the circumstances in which the words of the text were spoken—having seen the barrenness, in true love and obedience, of the self-righteous principles of the Pharisee, and the effect of the free forgiveness of her sins upon the sinner-woman—let me now announce, what may be deduced as the leading doctrine of the text, and, indeed, of the whole passage in which the text occurs, viz., "that a well-founded persuasion of our sins being forgiven will be followed by love to the author of our salvation, and a sincere desire to keep his commandments." In the process of a sinner's sanctification, faith first produces love, and then it works by love. And love, it is written, is the fulfilling of the law. No doubt, in every true work of sanctification, there must be ability to perform the duties of a holy life as well as inclination. But we know that, wherever there is the inclination of the will, there is also the promise to rely upon, "My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness." In every true act of obedience it is the holy Spirit that is "working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure ;" but at the same time he is working so consistently with the unconstrained exercise of all the inherent faculties of our natures, that we must obey the command "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." We do well to remember the first of these truths lest we sink into Pelagianism ; and we do well also to remember the second, lest we sink into Fatalism or Antinomianism. To the illustration and enforcing of the doctrine I have announced, I purpose,

depending upon the aid and blessing of the Holy Spirit, to address myself, for your edification as well as my own, in what remains of this course.

"A well-founded persuasion of our sins being forgiven will be followed by love to the author of our salvation, and a sincere desire to keep his commandments."

The law and the gospel presents very different motives to obedience ; and they would differ essentially about the structure of that very verse from which I now address you. Had the formation of it been committed to the law, it would have run thus, "This woman hath loved much, therefore she hath been forgiven much ; but whosoever loveth little, to the same is little forgiven ;"—an interpretation this, such as is put upon the verse by the Roman Catholics in support of their doctrine of the efficacy of good works, but one quite the reverse of the real and gospel sense. The law exacts obedience in the first instance, and then confers its reward. Whereas the gospel begins by bestowing its blessings, and after it has done so, bids the recipient "go and sin no more." The motive to holiness in the one case, arises from the hope of reward or the fear of punishment ; the motive to holiness in the other, arises from thankfulness for a blessing already received. I am aware that in this matter the self-righteous heart would argue for the efficacy of the legal, in opposition to the gospel, motive. It might ask, would not the strongest motive to lead a holy life, by which a man could be influenced, be to make his life eternal depend upon his success ? And is there no danger that if the sinner be freely forgiven and made sure of heaven, he may take encouragement to sin on under the feeling of impunity ? To these questions, I answer, no. On the very contrary, to set a man to work out his salvation by the deeds of the law would be the surest way to keep him under the power of sin, and prevent him from making any advancement in holiness. For why ; it throws the man upon the weak resources of a fallen nature, it binds him under a legal spirit, and it shuts him out from the helps and motives to obedience which the gospel affords.

Now, when there is no faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, there can be no love to God, and consequently no holiness of heart and life. How is it possible for the condemned sinner or enchained slave to love the object of his dread ? Love must be free and spontaneous in its origin and growth ; and it withers away under terror and restraint. It is like the sunflower, it rises to the rays of pardoning grace, but it droops under the frowns of an avenging judge. But let the angry judge lay aside his garments of vengeance—let him hold out the sceptre of forgiveness to the condemned sinner—let him throw open the iron gates to the

immured prisoner—let him impart the kiss of reconciliation to the returning prodigal; and thereupon, just as naturally and surely as effect follows its cause, will love to God be conceived in the womb of a free forgiveness. And if this reasoning be just, then the more we have been forgiven, the more will we love the author of our salvation. In other words, the deeper our convictions of our own sinfulness and misery, and the higher our appreciation of the mighty ransom paid for our souls, the more will we love the author of our salvation. For it is not by the amount we have been forgiven absolutely that our love is regulated (for no one's love is fully proportionate to what he has been forgiven absolutely), but it is by the amount we *know* and *feel* that we have been forgiven. And hence I pray you, dear friends, to seek after increase of faith, whereby you may know how much you have been forgiven—how much you owe to the author of your salvation, in order that your love may be as near a proportion as possible to your debt of gratitude.

You must have remarked the manner in which our Saviour sent away the sinner-woman, to the interesting event of whose life our attention has been directed, saying not a single word about her forsaking her sins and amending her life—about her ceasing to do evil and learning to do well; but only telling her, “Thy sins are forgiven, go in peace.” Was there no danger that, assured now that all was safe with her, she might take encouragement to return to the course of iniquity she had just left? None. Jesus knew there was none. For with the same hand with which he tore away the condemnation of her sins, did he sow the seeds of that principle of love which is the mainspring of new obedience—a principle that finds its only full development in the enjoyment of him who is holiness itself—a principle that lays its all as a willing dedication at the feet of Jesus—a principle that, through crosses, and persecutions, and shame, and death, will follow him—and a principle that, with the precept “keep my commandments,” has been inseparably linked. It is the very general opinion of the commentators of Scripture that this sinner-woman was the same Mary Magdalene out of whom Jesus cast seven devils. And if the opinion be correct, her subsequent conduct beautifully illustrates the doctrine of the efficaciousness of the free forgiveness of sin to draw on the forgiven sinner in the path of a holy and devoted life. Often did she minister to the Saviour of her substance. Seldom does she seem to have been away from him in all his wanderings and sorrows. And, during the scenes of his last suffering, there was none whose weeping and watching and unwearied services gave evidence of a stronger love, than that of Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene! She had been a great sinner. But she was forgiven much; and, therefore, so cheerfully did she take up her cross and follow her Saviour,

Many other illustrations to the same effect might be given. When Jesus called Zaccheus the publican to come down from the sycamore tree, all that he said to him was this—"To-day, I must abide at thy house." Yet it was quite enough to make him form the noble resolution, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

When the prodigal son, who had wandered so far astray, returned home, how was he met by his father? Was he upbraided for his undutifulness and debaucheries? Was he put upon a course of trial in order to find out whether he would forsake them and amend his life? No. Nothing of the kind. Without one word of upbraiding or about amendment, the tender-hearted and overjoyed father runs and falls upon his neck and kisses him. Such a reception said, "Thou art forgiven." But was there no danger of the prodigal returning to his former courses? I trow not. The elder son, who had served so many years, might have become a prodigal. All the servants in the household might have disobeyed. But see the son who had been lost and found, how eager he is to anticipate and accomplish his father's faintest wishes! And, if we are wont to distinguish justly between the services of a son and the services of a slave, his was an obedience raised far above all constraint and legal bondage.

In conclusion, permit me, as practical inferences from what has been said regarding the principle and working of evangelical obedience, to address to you the two following exhortations:—1st, Lay the foundation of a holy life by believing in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. This foundation is all-important. To attempt leading a holy life without its being laid is to build a house upon the sand. How is this foundation to be laid? O, sinner, however wicked and vile you may be, you have as good a warrant as any other, to believe upon Christ. Yea, though you be a sinner above all sinners, he came into the world not to condemn, but to save such as you. Do you still doubt your warrant to believe? I point to the woman whose behaviour at her interview with the Saviour is so worthy of the imitation of all who, like her, are lost and undone without a Saviour. I point to her and ask, "Seest thou this woman?" Are your sins greater than her's were? And if the blood of Christ was sufficient to purge out the deep stain of her guilt, what hinders it from purging out your's? Has his blood lost any of its efficacy? Or has he himself lost any of his willingness to save? These are some of the most important truths which the case of the sinner-woman illustrates, and of which I beseech you to be persuaded. Be persuaded that you yourself are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, an enemy to God and an heir of wrath—that it is the will of God

that you should turn unto him and live—and that there is an all-sufficiency of merit in Christ for your pardon and acceptance. And if by faith in the offered Saviour you set your seal to these things as true, I feel confident, with Paul, “that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus.” “Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

2dly, Make use of all appointed means for obtaining and practising holiness. The word, prayer, and other ordinances of the Gospel, are in your hands: be diligent in the use of them. And “let every one who believes in God be careful to maintain good works.” There are some Christians who may love Christ, but they do not show it much. Now, I would have you to remember, dear friends, that “this is the love of God that we keep his commandments.” “Hence,” said our Saviour, “is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” I ask you, if you had the same opportunity of confessing the Saviour, and of kissing and anointing his feet, as the sinner-woman had, would you embrace it? Is your love of that kind, flowing from a sense of being forgiven much, which constrains you to live not unto yourselves, but unto him who died for you and rose again? I ask not just now, whether you would fight for Christ? Neither whether you would die for him? But I ask you, whether you are ready to *live* for him? The Christian, in the race of new obedience, “forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And again, permit me to exhort you in your daily walk and business, to do everything from love to Christ. It is love to him that will gild your obedience with the golden hues of willingness and alacrity. Without love, your obedience must be legal and slavish. Without love, Christ’s yoke cannot be easy or his burden light. There are some Christians who seem to think that this principle of new obedience should be brought into exercise only upon great occasions. But, if in all things we are to glorify God, why should not love to God be our actuating principle in all things? As the end of our sanctification is the glory of God, its perfection consists in our being like to God. And when are we most like to God? Is it not when as he is love, love most fully fills our hearts? “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” AMEN.

SERMON XCVI.

THE DIFFICULTY OF ATTAINING TO A KNOWLEDGE OF OUR SINS.

BY THE REV. JONATHAN R. ANDERSON, KNOX'S CHURCH
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"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults."—PSALMS xix. 12.

THE course of David's meditations in this Psalm is very remarkable. He begins by contemplating the manifestations of Divine glory which are exhibited in the works of Creation—in the lofty arch of heaven and the wonders of the starry firmament—in the regular succession of day and night, and the universal testimony which they silently bear to the great Creator—in the position of the sun in the heavens, his regular rising and setting, and his widely-extended and benign influence. He then passes to the glories of another and more wonderful sphere of Divine operation, even the Word of revealed truth, and dwells with evident delight on its varied properties and excellencies and uses. But his near approach to this clear and powerful mirror led to discoveries that were as humiliating and painful, as the former had been elevating and refreshing. He sees his own deformity in the light of its beauty, his own depravity in the light of its holiness, and his own shortcomings in the light of its perfection. He shrinks not, however, from the disclosures of his sinfulness which are thus made, but dwells upon them till he is strongly impressed with the conviction that the subject is too immense and too weighty for him to comprehend. For, even the discoveries which he made, he felt he was unable to grasp, and he knew that there was much which still lay concealed from his observation. He, therefore, exclaimed, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults."

We have here a question put, and a prayer offered. We have first a question put, "Who can understand his errors?" The meaning of which evidently is that no man can understand his errors. But this must be taken with some limitation; for a knowledge of one's errors is indispensably necessary to salvation. Nor is it a slight knowledge which is thus required,

But, *first*, such a knowledge as will awaken the soul from the deep and delusive sleep into which it is lulled. The great majority of men, even of those who attend upon the preaching of the word, appear to be quite

at their ease with regard to the concerns of the soul, and the interests of an eternal world. A man might live with them from the one end of the year to the other, without discovering that they had such weighty matters to attend to. He could not be a single hour in their company without learning much about this world and its affairs, and hearing the anxious enquiry put, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink;" but never would he hear the momentous question asked, "What must I do to be saved?" And why is this? It is because men do not see the errors into which they have fallen, and into which they are falling every moment; they do not see the guilt and danger which attend them, nor the degradation and misery which flow from them. We do not mean to say that they think themselves infallible or free from sin, for they will readily admit they have their faults; nor will they scruple sometimes to make use of the strong language of Scripture, and own that they are sinners, great sinners. But these are mere words, which have, in their mouths, little or no meaning, for they never see their errors so as to be greatly disturbed by them or troubled about them. No sight of errors will shake men out of their false security and self-sufficiency, but that which is imparted by the Spirit of God, exhibiting to their minds the pure and holy law of God, and quickening and enlightening their consciences to raise its voice in awful and irresistible convictions. The subject then becomes too serious to be trifled with, the truth is too plain to be denied, the light is too powerful to be resisted, the convictions of guilt are too strong to be stifled. The man is pricked in the heart, and cries out, "What must I do."

In the *second* place, a man must have such a knowledge of his errors as will drive him out of all the refuges of lies to which he may betake himself for salvation. To be awakened to a sense of guilt and a discovery of sin is not enough. For though no man is saved without this, many have it and yet perish. While, therefore, all who are living in ease and security are openly and undeniably in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, peacefully gliding down the stream that terminates in the regions of woe, it is not every one that is awakened to a sense of sin that is travelling to heaven. A man may awfully miscarry in this point, and instead of escaping from his sins, have them more closely rivetted upon him. He may lay violent hands upon his convictions, and stifle them in the very birth; and that by plunging into the vortex of business, of folly, or of dissipation, or by saying with Felix, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee." In some cases, however, the convictions are too strong to be thus disposed of; and the man can find neither peace nor rest till he do something in the way of amendment. He may have been a flagrant trans-

gressor, and now he abandons the high road of iniquity, and turns into the bye-paths of sobriety and industry; and in his own eyes and in the eyes of his neighbours, he is a changed man. But with others this is not enough; they must get some knowledge of Christ—they must have some lively affections towards him—they must engage in secret, it may be also in social prayer—they must make a public profession of faith in Christ, and by these means they quiet their consciences and keep their hearts in peace. The flood of errors does indeed burst forth at intervals, in spite of the barriers they have thrown up to restrain it; and their troubles thus return, and their peace is fled. But by a greater attention to duties, by a new flash of feeling, and resolutions to be more careful in time to come, the breach is repaired, and all is well. In all this, however, they are framing a refuge of lies which will not bear the scrutiny of eternal truth and righteousness. The man who is brought to see his errors in the light of the Word and Spirit of Christ, is driven out of every one of these expedients, and though he may try them one after another, and at last all of them put together, he cannot find rest. His wounds are still open, his heart is still disquieted, and he is ready to conclude there is no salvation for him. “In vain is salvation looked for from the hills and the multitude of mountains.”

In the *third* place, a man must so know his errors as to be convinced that he is utterly helpless, and righteously deserves to perish. We can conceive of an individual so enlightened, and so wrought upon by the common operations of the holy Spirit, as to see that the self-righteous devices to which we have referred are fallacious and dangerous, and yet secretly cherish the imagination that, at all events, he can believe in Christ and repent of his sins, and thus obtain eternal salvation. To tell such a man that in and of himself he is as little able to believe as he is to purchase redemption, and that for his carnal faith and selfish repentance he is as justly exposed to condemnation as for his flagrant sins, is to utter a *hard* saying, which he cannot bear. What! do you mean to say, that a man who rejects the self-righteousness of the Pharisee, and who protests that he cannot be saved but by the faith of the gospel, may yet be sent to hell? Who, then, can be saved? In answer to all this, we say that one of the errors of which a man who comes to Christ must be convinced, is the error of unbelief—an error which consists not only in a natural impotency to believe, but in a deep-rooted dislike to believing; and he that discovers this error will see that he is utterly undone, and that he cannot put in the least claim for salvation. He cannot, by anything he pretends to do by faith or works, make God his debtor; and, therefore, if justice take its course, he must perish. The language of all who are brought to Christ for salvation is, “Lord, save me, I perish.”

In the *fourth* place, a man must so understand his errors as to come to Christ and embrace him as he is offered in the gospel. Let a man even be convinced that there is "no other name given under heaven among men, whereby he must be saved, than the name of Jesus," his sense of guilt may be such as will allow him quietly to sit down in the speculative belief of this truth, without seeking to apply it to himself for his peace and salvation. But when the Spirit of the Lord has been at work with the soul, the burden is felt to be so heavy that it cannot be borne; and Christ is seen to be so excellent and desirable that the man cannot live without him; and when the Spirit brings an individual thus far, he never leaves him till a vital and indissoluble union is effected between Christ and the soul. By this means, he obtains interest in him through whom sin is taken away and righteousness imputed; and he who before was a child of wrath is made an heir of God. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now, it is the man that is brought into this happy state who feels that he cannot understand his errors in the sense in which the Psalmist speaks.

For, in the *1st* place, he cannot fully comprehend the errors which he knows. He is habitually occupied with the word of Christ, for it dwells richly in him in all wisdom; but there are seasons when he engages in more solemn and regular meditations upon it; and the effect which these meditations frequently have is to discover to him more and more of the errors into which he has fallen. But especially is this the case, when his meditations are directed to the glory of the divine character, as it shines forth from his works and word, and most of all from the person of Christ, who is the beginning of the creation, the eternal Word of God. The patriarch Abraham had a vivid impression of the glory of the Lord, as the judge of all the earth, and the governor among the nations, when he pleaded before him for the preservation of the cities of the plain. And mark the feelings which he had regarding himself—"Behold, I have taken upon me to speak, who am but dust and ashes." The prophet Isaiah was favoured with a most sublime vision of the glory of Christ, the immediate effect of which was to remind him of his vows, and to cause him to exclaim—"Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." And what does the Apostle Paul say of the influence which the law had upon him, when it came to him with divine power and demonstration? "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died." But there is this peculiarity attending the discovery of errors thus made to a true believer—he is impressed with the conviction that he does not comprehend them.

1. He does not fully understand their nature. To many their errors appear but slight inadvertencies, the result of a little negligence or forgetfulness ; or, at most, the momentary ebullitions of passion, and the effects merely of thoughtlessness. Be their conduct what it may, it is rarely, indeed, that they charge themselves with an intention to do what is evil ; and hence their errors are soon forgotten, and easily corrected. But very different is the estimate of a true believer, especially in the seasons of solemn meditation to which we have just alluded ; for then his errors rise before him in something of their real magnitude ; and, whatever be the form which they have assumed in thought, word, or deed, he traces them to the principles of a deeply corrupted nature, and that nature he knows, from the testimony of the Word of God and by his own bitter experience, is directly opposed to the will of God—nay, most bitterly hostile to his being and perfections. Now, whether he look to the immensity of glory that belongs to the divine nature, to the holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine law, or to the wonderful discoveries of the gospel of Christ, he feels that his errors, being opposed to God in each and all of these views, have in them an extent of impiety and baseness which he cannot comprehend. “The carnal mind is enmity against God ; it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be.” “But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.”

2. He does not understand the varieties of his errors. The source being incomprehensible, it follows that the streams must be so too. For let it never be forgotten, that the dark and baleful elements which pertain to corrupt human nature, diffuse their influence throughout all the errors into which men are plunged. It is this which fills the exercised soul with so much grief and shame, because of errors which others pass over as comparatively trivial. For he knows something of the dishonour which is cast upon the Divine name, the contempt that is shown to the blessed Redeemer, and the despite that is done to the Spirit of grace. He, indeed, commits sins of ignorance, and these to many appear undeserving of punishment. But a true believer asks, Whence comes this ignorance ? For was not man made in the image of God, and possessed of a knowledge of his holy will ? And besides, is there not presented in the holy Scriptures a perfect rule of righteousness ? He thus discovers that ignorance is his sin, and so also is every error that flows from it. He may fall into errors through rashness or passion ; and this to some would be a sufficient excuse for their conduct. But to him it is rather an aggravation of his offence, and he mourns over the sinful deed, and the corrupt passion from which it proceeded. He is, however, drawn into presumptuous sin ; and, against light, and conviction, and reproof, runs greedily in the way of iniquity ; and these are the most

painful and troublesome of his errors. He may go lame and sorrowful many days, because of a presumptuous sin.

But, beside these, there are other varieties of errors which might be mentioned, each of which is, to the believer's mind, a great deep which he cannot fathom. For errors are as various as the faculties of the mind and the members of the body—the ordinances of God's house and the means of grace—the relations of human life and the business of the world—the sources of enjoyment and the opportunities of improvement. We might instance the capital error of practical atheism which so abounds in our day, and by which the very being of God is, in thought and wish, denied; and, though it be in him we live and move and have our being, yet men habitually forget him. We might refer to the kindred error of idolatry, or the setting of the affections on any object in preference to the one living and true God, and that, too, like Israel at Horeb, under the immediate inspection of the All-seeing eye. For, as the glory of the Divine being is infinite, the offence thus offered to his Majesty is one which no finite mind can comprehend. We might adduce the foul sin of hypocrisy, in which a systematic attempt is made to deceive the Omniscient God, and to present a vain and hollow profession for the spiritual service which he requires. We might speak of the heinous error of formality in religion, in which men substitute for the grand realities of Divine worship the empty shadow of the means by which it ought to be maintained and rendered. But, passing from these, we call your attention to the sin of *unbelief* as the reigning sin of the church, and the damning sin of our nature, and which may be said to concentrate in itself the malignity and force of every other error. For this sin is levelled at the person of the Son of God incarnate, who is the image of the invisible God, and in whom, therefore, the Divine character is to be seen and known by the children of men—who is the only righteousness by which sinners can be justified before God, and in whom the law appears in all its beauty and authority—who is the Mediator of the new covenant, by whom men are to be brought nigh unto God, and be blessed with his favour, conformed to his image, and made meet for his glory. In a word, he is the Head of all things to his church, in whom alone men are to find the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption which they need. He is, however, the mystery of godliness, and is in his riches unsearchable, and in his love past finding out. Who, then, can understand the error of rejecting him? And yet this is the error which is justly chargeable on vast multitudes that throng the courts of the Lord's house, and observe his ordinances. And this, too, is the error which the people of God have to mourn over and confess. The apostle warns the Hebrews to take heed, "lest there be in

any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

3. A believer does not fully understand the number of his errors. We speak of those of which he has some knowledge—not of those that are buried in oblivion. And at the season to which we have referred, these appear not only in awful magnitude and great variety, but also in overwhelming numbers. To reckon up even the errors, indeed, into which he sees he has fallen, is impossible. For, though the actions themselves may have been right in the main, yet what corruption is detected in the motive by which they were dictated, what deficiency in the manner in which they are performed? The errors of speech, too, are as numerous as are the words he has uttered. For whether he has preached or prayed, talked of spiritual subjects or of worldly affairs, sought for information, or communicated intelligence, he sees that he has grievously erred. But, moreover, when he looks into the chambers of imagery, and reviews the thoughts, and feelings, and affections that have there appeared, he is confounded and ashamed; and wonders at the forbearance of God in not sending him quick to hell. For, besides a world of vain and sinful thoughts, he sees that his spiritual exercises have been stained with pride, vain glory, self-sufficiency, self-seeking, and a thousand elements that cause him to be ashamed even of them. "For innumerable evils have compassed me about, and mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I cannot look up."

4. He cannot fully understand the aggravations of his errors. The natural man is ever prone to seek after and lay hold of the circumstances which may palliate the offences he has committed; and he labours to put the best possible face on his conduct, both before himself and others. But a man who is taught of God desires to know the worst of his errors; and, therefore, meditates chiefly on those points in which they appear most heinous and offensive. And yet, after the utmost he discovers, he is forced to admit that the aggravating circumstances surpass his knowledge. He cannot, for instance, tell the value of the redemption which has been purchased by Christ, and yet his sins do frequently involve a slighting of his precious blood. He cannot measure the worth of the grace of the Holy Spirit, and yet he has often to confess that he has grieved that blessed agent. He cannot estimate the importance of his own soul's health and prosperity, and yet his errors are aggravated by the injury they do to his own best interests. He cannot calculate the evil he may do to others, and yet his errors do frequently exert a most pernicious influence in the way of example. A similar train of illustration might be pursued as to every circumstance which go to aggravate the errors of a true believer, whether it be light or

privileges, means or judgments, comforts or afflictions, eminent gifts or distinguished attainments. For each of these presents a subject of thought too great for his mind to grasp; and, therefore, with respect to them and their connection with his sin, he may say, "Who can understand his errors?"

5. He cannot fully understand the demerit of his errors. For he cannot comprehend the glory of the Divine name—he cannot estimate the dishonour which sin casts upon it, and therefore he cannot conceive the punishment that is due to it. The Lord has, indeed, filled his Word with the most awful denunciations of wrath against the transgressors, and these he has confirmed by instances of the most tremendous inflictions. But when a believer has the liveliest perception of their meaning, and the most vivid impression of their nature, he is most sensibly convinced there is in sin a depth of demerit which he cannot sound. If an act of idolatry cost Israel three thousand men—if an act of rebellion cost them twenty-four thousand—if one act of perverseness subjected the whole nation to forty years wandering in the wilderness, we may well exclaim, "Who can stand before the holy Lord God?" But it is when meditating on the mysterious agonies of the Man of Sorrows, that the believer obtains his strongest convictions that he is unable to estimate the demerit of sin. For every particular in that memorable scene reads to him, with a voice most penetrating and melting, the lesson that it is an evil thing and a bitter to sin against God. "Who knoweth the power of his anger? according to his fear, so is his wrath." We might go on to shew that he does not fully understand his errors in their consequences, but we pass from this, to observe,

In the 2d place, that of many of his errors a believer has no knowledge at all. To be satisfied of this, we have only to look into the view which the Scriptures give of the state of man by nature, and to remember that many of the children of God live in this state for a long series of years. Now, if that state be one of alienation from God and hostility to him, of total destitution of righteousness and entire subjection to sin, what must be the consequence, but that errors will multiply every moment? and that quickly as thought succeeds thought, so quickly does the sum of errors go on to accumulate. We can only stand in astonishment and say, "Who can understand his errors?" For every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil and that continually.

A man, when he is awakened to a sense of his condition, sees something of this vast mass of iniquity. But, oh, how small a portion does he know! He imagines that it is scarcely possible to conceive of sins more numerous and heinous than those on which his attention is fixed.

But it were easy for the Lord by his Spirit to multiply the number a thousand fold, and still exhibit only a very small fraction of the sin which lies fully and distinctly before his Omniscient eye. He knows, however, that the feeble creature could not endure the sight, and therefore in tender mercy he forbears. And, yet, even this is not all. For, to form a complete estimate of the errors with which men are chargeable in the sight of God, they ought to take into account those which, but for the restraints of Divine providence and grace, they would have committed; and those also which their nature is capable of committing, and in itself disposed to commit, though no occasion should occur to draw out the disposition into actual exercise. But, here again, we are lost and bewildered, and can only exclaim, "Who can understand his errors!" "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?"

A true believer is in some measure alive to his spiritual condition, and, as we have seen, has such a knowledge of his errors as shuts him up to the faith of Christ for salvation. But how immense is the number of errors which daily escape his observation! For it is impossible for him to mark, far less to record the millionth part of the vain and foolish thoughts that pass through his mind; and in his words and actions he has ample reason to believe there are blemishes and corruptions which are known only to the Searcher of hearts. In this view, also, have we to exclaim, "Who can understand his errors?" "For we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away."

But whose errors are they that are thus incomprehensible? Not the errors of the human race, not the errors of a whole nation, not the errors of a large city, no not even the errors of a single family, but the errors of each individual. By this consideration ought the matter to be brought home to the bosom of every man. For it proves, that vast as is the mass of iniquity of which we have been discoursing, it is one which belongs to him, and for which he is responsible. He may indeed forget his errors, he may deny them, but the connection between him and them is established by eternal truth and inflexible justice; and no power on earth can dissolve it. For he whose eyes are upon the ways of men, and who seeth all their goings, has set the iniquities of every man before him, their secret sins in the light of his countenance. To him they are all as distinctly and fully known as though they were small in number, and slight in aggravation; and most assuredly he will convince them that these errors belong to them, either here in his Divine mercy, or hereafter in his righteous judgment. "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee."

And who is it that can understand his errors? The ungodly world do not understand them. For they will not believe that they are chargeable with any gross crime at all, and will not be at the pains to enquire into the nature and magnitude of their sins. The mere hearers of the Gospel do not understand them, for with dreadful perverseness they convert the discovery of their sins into a source of entertainment, and often return from the word preached with as much satisfaction as they would from some scene of amusement. The carnal professors that abound in the church do not understand them. It is indeed part of their religion to confess that they have their errors; no man, they will say, is perfect. But it is easy to see they know nothing of the subject, for it sits as lightly upon them as though they were guilty only of some venial faults. But even true believers do not understand their errors, and this in their best moments they know and acknowledge. In seasons of indolence and ease, they may imagine that their errors are neither very numerous nor very grievous. But, let the light of Divine holiness shine in upon them, and let them see light in his light, and then one of the first exclamations they make is, "Who can understand his errors?" "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

We cannot now enter upon the other branch of the text, namely, the prayer which the Psalmist offers, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults," but we proceed to draw some practical inferences from the views that have been illustrated.

1. The subject before us presents ample cause of abasement before God. We see this even in the errors of which we may have some knowledge; for how much is there in them that dishonours God, that is contrary to his law, hostile to the Saviour, and grieving to the Spirit. But if we might be humbled for what we know, how much more for what we do not know and are unable to fathom? for we may safely conclude that, dark as are the features of our sin which at any time we contemplate, there are darker features hid from our view. How great, then, must be the burden of guilt which lies upon a soul that is not a partaker of pardoning mercy! A single error infers eternal condemnation! What, then, must be the state of him who has infinite errors standing against him?

2. We may learn something of the riches of the Divine forbearance both towards sinners and towards his own people; for, numerous and aggravated as are their errors, not one of them escapes his all-seeing eye. And then he sees each of these errors in its own nature and full demerit. We may, therefore, wonder that he allows such creatures as we are to live on the face of the earth, and to continue to provoke the

e yes of his glory to jealousy by our inventions ; and especially as he sees that the great mass of mankind carry themselves as proudly as though no fault could be laid to their charge, and knows that of those who do profess to acknowledge their errors many do it in hypocrisy or self-deception ; and that, even of the few that confess their sins with some measure of truth and sincerity, there is a vast amount of corruption in their very acknowledgment of sins. We may truly say, "it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." "I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

3. We see how great and how precious is the redemption purchased by Christ. The load of guilt which, as the surety of sinners, he bore, is one which no finite mind can comprehend ; for, if we are bewildered by the errors of a solitary individual, what must have been the guilt of the errors of a world ? and yet this is the guilt which was imputed to the Son of God when he stood in the room of his people. "The Lord," says the Prophet Isaiah, speaking in name of the Church, "hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all." In virtue of this great work, he brings to his chosen a redemption which hath a "height and a depth, a breadth, a length that passeth knowledge." No wonder, then, that the angels desire to look into it ! But it was such a redemption they needed ; for how absurd is the idea that men can give satisfaction for errors which they do not understand ? and yet this absurdity attaches to every method of salvation which has been devised by the folly of men. The whole universe of creatures could not furnish a store of merit to compensate for the errors of men and the dishonour they had done to God and his law ; and, therefore, God sent his Son, who by reason of the dignity of his person, rendered complete satisfaction to divine justice, and thus laid a foundation for the pardon of those whose errors had reached unto the clouds ; "For where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound."

4. We see how mighty is the work that is wrought by the Holy Spirit in subduing the corruptions of the human heart. In his grace he enters the soul in which numberless errors are found, and causes light to shine amidst the dense darkness which prevails. He mortifies the depraved principles by which errors are framed, and implants principles which work by love and are productive of true holiness. He subdues errors of thought, affection, and will, and guides into exercises that are spiritual and heavenly. How thankful ought the people of God to be for this Divine gift, and how careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit of promise, by whom they are sealed unto the day of redemption ! "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

5. We have here presented to us a striking view of the life of faith. For while carnal sense and reason detect only slight errors, they put a man upon efforts to make them still more slight, so that he may the more easily atone for them and subdue them. But faith teaches a man to take deep and enlarged views of his errors; and, instead of diminishing them either in number or enormity, leads him to acknowledge that they far exceed his comprehension; and yet with this immense load of guilt does it bring him to Christ as all-sufficient to save. For let a man's errors be ever so great, there is in Christ an ample store of righteousness to justify and of grace to sanctify him. He may, indeed, say that he could go to Christ with greater confidence, and hope in his salvation with greater readiness, were his errors less numerous or less heinous. But this is the desponding language of unbelief, and arises from mistaken views of the glory of Christ and of the extent of his redemption. For if, in the view of his sinfulness, a believer should exclaim, "Who can understand his errors?" in the contemplation of Christ, he may acknowledge that none can comprehend his greatness or his grace. We know that as it is only in the strong and searching light of divine purity that believers can obtain such views of their errors, as to lead them intelligently and sincerely to use the language of the text, so it is only in the same divine light that a man can so see Christ as to rely upon him and to rejoice in him. A slight view of Christ may suffice for the man who has a slight sense of sin. But he that sees his errors to be infinitely vile and destructive, must see Christ to be unspeakably glorious and precious.

6. We may here learn how little true faith there is in the midst of the flaming profession of our day. For few seem to be at all occupied with their errors, and fewer still to see them in the light in which the Psalmist beheld them. And, hence, it is, that as men's knowledge of their errors evaporates in idle talk, so do their notions of Christ. We should regard it as a token for good, were the Lord to break in upon the ease of professors, to disturb their false and soul-destroying peace, and to bring them to such a sight of their errors, that nothing less than glorious Christ, apprehended by the faith of Divine operation, would satisfy them. For if men do not awake to this discovery here, they are ripening for a discovery hereafter, which will appal and overwhelm them. And through an endless eternity will they learn by the endurance of Divine wrath that their errors are infinite. Oh that you were wise to seek to escape from the coming wrath! For thus saith the Lord "As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn unto me and live. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

SERMON XCVII.

THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING THE SOUL'S SALVATION.

BY THE REV. THOMAS PITCAIRN, COCKPEN.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—JER. viii. 20.

(Preached after the celebration of the Lord's Supper.)

SUCH is the language in which the Prophet represents the Jews as speaking of their woeful condition at the time the Lord was visiting them with his grievous, yet righteous, judgments. They had been trusting to Egypt for help against their enemies, now pressing hard upon them and threatening their destruction. Their expected allies, however, had not made their appearance, and the present miserable condition of the Israelites was rendered more deplorable and desperate, by the circumstance, that the season was now past and gone in which they could reasonably look for assistance being effectively given, or even given at all. The harvest and summer had closed, and the winter was approaching, in which they knew that nothing could be done. In this sad and melancholy condition they exclaim in the bitterness of their hearts, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Considering that the language of the Israelites on this occasion may with all propriety be viewed as descriptive of the state of a soul not yet delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the feelings of that soul when awakened to a sense of its condition, I shall in the following discourse, and in humble dependence on Divine assistance, speak, *first*, of the particular state of the soul of which the language of the text may be said to be true; *secondly*, of the peculiar guilt and danger connected with such a state; and, *thirdly*, of the bitterness and anguish of spirit experienced by those who have been brought to know and to feel that this is their own condition. And may the Spirit direct into the truth, and enable us to receive it, and to profit by it.

I. In the *first place*, then, let us consider the state of the soul, of which the language of the text may be said to be descriptive.

And here let it be observed, 1st, that it is a soul not saved—not yet delivered out of its naturally ruined and lost estate—not yet delivered from guilt and wrath—not yet delivered from the slavery of sin—a soul not yet plucked as a brand from the burning, but still in danger of the everlasting fire—a soul not yet ransomed from the power of the evil one, but still led captive by him at his will—a soul which has neither part nor lot in the salvation which Christ has purchased, and which is the only salvation whereby any child of fallen Adam can be made free from the guilt and bondage of his natural condition. A soul “not saved,” is, in other words, a soul *still lost*—lost to the grand end of its existence—unable to glorify God, and having no relish for such an employment—quite unfit, too, for holding any fellowship with him, having no title to his favour, and no disposition whatever to partake of it—morally incapable of serving and enjoying God either in this world or in that which is to come, and, more than this, liable to his displeasure throughout all eternity, exposed to everlasting destruction from his presence and glory.

To a mind duly impressed with divine things, nothing can be more affecting than the condition of a soul made for glorifying and enjoying its Creator, yet underlying the everlasting displeasure of its sovereign Lord. How deeply pained was the pious Psalmist when he said, “I beheld transgressors and was grieved!” “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” How grieved the great Apostle of the Gentiles when, in his epistle to the Philippians, he refers to the case of those who proved themselves to be the enemies of the truth! “Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction—whose god is their belly—whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things.” They only who have been awakened to a sense of their natural condition, and who know something experimentally of the great salvation, can rightly understand what it is for a soul not to be saved. It is a peculiarly melancholy circumstance, that the great majority of men have no just apprehension of their condition—their souls are lost, but they do not know it, at least the knowledge of it does not at all affect them. And so it may be with not a few of those whom I now address—of your precious and immortal souls it must be said that they are “not saved,” but yet you do not rightly apprehend your condition. The God of this world hath so blinded your eyes and hardened your hearts, that you neither understand the state in which you are placed, nor are at all affected by its misery. It may be you are flattering yourselves that all is well, while in reality you are on the very brink of destruction. Oh! that he whose power neither earth nor

hell can withstand, would dispel the mists of self-delusion, and give you to see so clearly, and to feel so deeply, your lost and ruined condition, that you may be led without delay to flee from the wrath to come !

Considering the language of the text as descriptive of the state of a soul, let it be observed, *2dly*, on this part of the subject, that it implies that the soul remains in the condition of "not saved," *notwithstanding that it has enjoyed opportunities of salvation*. There was a season in which the Israelites might have had deliverance. The harvest and summer presented a favourable opportunity for obtaining the assistance which they needed ; but, notwithstanding of the precious season which they had enjoyed, deliverance had not come—they were still unsaved. Now, the peculiar state of the soul of which we are here reminded is that of "not saved," although the opportunities of salvation have been enjoyed. It is the case of one in a very different state from the perishing heathen, who, although they may be said to have their season of opportunity in God's long-suffering patience with them, yet have not the means of salvation placed within their reach. It is the case of one whose soul is "not saved," although a way of deliverance has been plainly set before him.

He has not been left in ignorance respecting his condition ; he has not been left in the state of those on whom a ray of light respecting God and eternal things has never shone. He has had plainly set before him, and earnestly and repeatedly pressed on his attention, his lost and ruined, his miserable and dangerous condition. He has been told of a way whereby he might escape the righteous wrath and curse of an offended God. He has been told also of the blood which has been shed for the remission of all his sins, of the righteousness which has been provided for his acceptance, of the Spirit who is able to cleanse him from all his pollution. More than this, the sinner has had all these blessings pressed upon his acceptance. He has been invited to partake ; he has been asked to do so without money and without price. He has been earnestly entreated and solicited, as he would regard the glory of God and his own personal safety, not to put away from him the offers of a salvation so full and so free. He has had every possible encouragement presented to him to induce him to comply. He has been fully warned of the danger of turning a deaf ear to the voice of mercy. He has, in short, enjoyed the most precious opportunities—he has not only had the word of truth in his possession, but he has been privileged to wait on the preaching of the Gospel, and other means of spiritual improvement ; and yet, after all, his soul is "not saved."

Now, this is precisely the case with all of you who are yet unconverted. You are not in the condition of the heathen, who have never

heard of a way of salvation. You cannot plead ignorance of a provided Saviour. You cannot say that the offers of reconciliation have never been addressed to you. Your souls are still in a lost condition, notwithstanding that a way of safety has been plainly set before you—notwithstanding that you have had the most ample opportunities of learning about the sufficiency and willingness of a Saviour—notwithstanding that Sabbath after Sabbath you have listened to the glad tidings of peace—notwithstanding that you have been again and again entreated to come unto Christ for life. You have had the light shining around you, but you have preferred the darkness. You have had life offered to you, but you have chosen death—spiritual and everlasting death. You have enjoyed the harvest and summer of privilege, but have reaped no benefit. This is true of all of you who are yet unsaved; and oh! if it be an affecting thing to contemplate a soul unjustified, unsanctified, unsaved, in whatever circumstances that soul may be placed, it is still more affecting when we consider a soul remaining in this condition, notwithstanding repeated overtures of safety made, and earnest entreaties to close with them. How melancholy to behold an individual whose life is in danger not only refusing to avail himself of offered safety, but willingly rushing into the arms of death! But so it is with you, and with all who live in the enjoyment of Gospel privileges, and are yet unsaved; and your case is all the more melancholy than that to which I have referred, in respect that the life which you despise, and the death which you prefer, do not affect the body so much as the soul—are not temporal, but spiritual and everlasting.

We have considered the words of the text as descriptive of a soul “not saved,” and of a soul “not saved” although it has enjoyed opportunities of salvation. There is another idea suggested, and that is, that *the favourable opportunities which the soul has failed to improve have passed away never to return.* This harvest and summer, in which the Israelites expected deliverance, but did not obtain it, were past and ended, and that for ever; and so we are led to view the soul “not saved,” at the close of seasons of grace and opportunities of salvation, lost and gone for ever. Let us now, therefore, *3dly*, take this view of the state of souls yet unsaved, and speak of some of those precious seasons and opportunities at the close of which it may be said that “the harvest is past and the summer ended.”

At the close of every unimproved Sabbath, may it be said of those whose souls are still unsaved, that the harvest is past and the summer is ended. The Sabbath is a precious opportunity for learning about God, and hearing of the things that concern the soul; then, especially, is the sinner called, in the preaching of the word, to accept of the

offered salvation. But Sabbaths pass away no more to return, and if at the close of the day of holy rest, pre-eminent for the enjoyment of Gospel privileges, the soul be still unsaved, then a precious opportunity is for ever lost, there is no retrieving it, it is another day of grace gone, another day of offered mercy slighted, no more to return. Oh ! how little is this thought of by careless sinners. They go to their homes from the house of God, altogether unimpressed by the truths which have been delivered to them, and they lie down on their beds at night without considering for a moment the awfully solemn circumstances in which they are placed—that the precious season which they have failed to improve is never again to return, that the particular entreaties to which they have listened, they are no more to hear, and that they are entirely dependent on the forbearance of him whom they have provoked, whether they shall see another Sabbath, or ever again be permitted to listen to the glad tidings of salvation.

At the close of a sacramental season, may it be said of those whose souls are still unsaved, that the harvest is past and the summer ended. Such a season we are not only to look upon as very precious for the edification of Christ's people, but as affording specially favourable opportunities for the salvation of sinners. Not only is the love of Christ, and the efficacy of his death visibly set forth to the eye of the beholder, in the ordinance of the Supper, but at such a season there is usually a plentiful supply of Gospel preaching, in which the truth is variously exhibited and pressed on the heart and conscience. It is, in every respect, a precious time, a season in which God may be said, in a peculiar manner, to wait to be gracious, dealing with the utmost kindness and compassion towards sinners, as well as in great love to his people. And being so, it may well be said at the close of it, by those whose souls are still unsaved, that the harvest is past and the summer ended. We have lately been enjoying such a precious season. Can any of you say that, in consequence of what you heard or witnessed at that time, you were brought under serious impressions, awakened to a sense of sin, and led to cry out, "What must we do to be saved?" Can any of you say, on comparing your state now with what it was only a short time ago, that a great change has taken place, that whereas you were then in darkness, your eyes have now been opened to behold the marvellous light of the Gospel? If not, this precious season has been lost—God has been waiting to be gracious to you, but you have refused to listen—Christ has been offering to you life, but you have refused to come to him for it. And the season is gone, gone no more to return; you shall not hear of it again, until it be enquired of you at the great day, what the truths which were then addressed to you

and what the reception which the Gospel message met with at your hands.

Again, *at the close of a season of special revival of God's work*, may it be said of those whose souls are unsaved, that the harvest is past and the summer ended. God's word never fails in accomplishing its purposes, and when faithfully, believingly, and prayerfully declared, it will always be instrumental in producing some good results, in the case both of saints and sinners, although these results may not come within the sphere of our observation. There do, however, again and again occur in this, and the other portion of the visible Church, seasons of special revival, times in which the preaching of the word is more remarkably blessed in the edification of Christ's people, and particularly in the conversion of sinners. Now, such seasons are particularly precious, they may be said to present a summer and harvest of no ordinary promise. The power of the truth is more openly and extensively manifested, its peace-giving and sanctifying influence more strikingly displayed. God is, as it were, more urgent with sinners, and the door appears, if I may so speak, to be set wider open. And if, at the close of such a season as this, the soul of the sinner is yet unsaved, well may it be said in regard to those who have not improved the opportunity, that the harvest is past and the summer ended—and, still more melancholy thought! perhaps never again in the experience of such, to return in any other form. The time of God's special visitation has passed away, and the soul continues distant from him as before, quite unimpressed by the gracious and wondrous doings of the Lord. And not only is the particular season for ever gone, but such another season may never again be witnessed, such another precious opportunity may never again be enjoyed, such a plentiful communication of the Spirit may not again be bestowed.

When nature begins to fail, may it not also be said in regard to those who are not saved, that the harvest is past and the summer ended? The season for attending to the soul's everlasting concerns is surely when all the bodily and mental faculties are in vigorous exercise—when we have ability to wait on the means of grace—when our eyes permit us to peruse God's word—when we have ears to hear the glad tidings of salvation—and so long as our mental powers are unimpaired, and have not rendered us incapable of reflection on spiritual things. In so far as respects the salvation of the soul, this is surely the time of summer and harvest; and, when nature begins to fail—when, to employ the language of Solomon, the day comes that “the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and those that look out at the windows be darkened, and the doors are shut in the streets”—and when the powers of the mind lose their vigour and decay—when these things

take place, what can we say, but that the harvest is past and the summer is ended?—that the season for attending to eternal things has gone by, and that, although the individual may not be beyond the reach of Divine grace, yet the season in which God is usually pleased to bestow it is past and gone for ever. I speak to some who are advancing in years, and whose souls, notwithstanding the privileges they have enjoyed, may yet be unsaved. Remember, my friends, that the day of opportunity with you is drawing rapidly to a close. Even although you may be spared a little longer in the world, you may not be spared long in the enjoyment of those powers and faculties which are necessary in order to your giving heed to eternal things; from inability to attend on the means of grace—from want of sight or hearing—from decay of mental vigour, your day of grace may very soon come to an end. Give, then, all diligence now in the matters of the soul's salvation, so that if such a season should overtake you, there may not then be occasion for applying to your case the words of the text—"The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and you are not saved."

But we have yet to contemplate a still more affecting close of the harvest and summer of Gospel light and privilege, for *at the end of life, and in the immediate prospect of death*, it may especially be said of those who are not saved, that the harvest is past and the summer is ended. Life—the short and uncertain period of human life on earth—is the only season given to man for obtaining the salvation of the soul. After death, nothing more can be done. "To him," saith the wise man, (Eccles. ix. 4), "To him that is joined to all the living, there is hope. For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." And it was doubtless under a deep impression of the same truth that he presses the earnest exhortation contained in the 10th verse, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Oh! may it not then be said, when the life of the poor careless sinner comes to a close—when he is stretched on a bed of death, and about to pass into eternity—may it not be said that the harvest is past and the summer is ended? He is no more to hear the Gospel's glad tidings—he is no more to be invited to come to Christ—he is, at least, to have no more the opportunity of waiting on the outward and ordinary means of grace. His state, perhaps, is such, that he cannot listen to any kind of counsel which may yet be addressed to him by the bystander. The end of all things has come, and he passes

into eternity without a single ray of hope, with no other prospect than the blackness of darkness for ever. Ye who are uninterested in the great salvation, think of this. Thus it has been with many before you, and thus it may be with you—thus it may be with you very speedily unless Divine grace and mercy interpose. It may be, that you shudder at the very thought of death coming upon you ere your souls are prepared for eternity. Make haste, then, and delay not. Flee to the provided refuge—lay hold of the Saviour who is now offered to your acceptance, and take him as your only sure and satisfying portion.

II. Having now considered the particular state of the soul to which the language of the text may be applied, I proceed, in the *second* place, to direct attention to the peculiar guilt and danger connected with such a state.

Wherever and in whatever circumstances there exists a soul unsaved, there, there is guilt, and consequently danger. Sin, on the part of every child of fallen Adam, is heinous in the sight of God—involves the sinner in guilt, and necessarily exposes him to punishment. Even the heathen are guilty and condemned before God, and we are expressly assured in regard to them, that they are without excuse in remaining in their present state of darkness, because the eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen from the things that are made.

And if this be the case with the heathen, how much more aggravated the guilt and awful the condemnation of those who have enjoyed the light of the gospel, but refused to walk in it—who have had the overtures of mercy made, but declined to accept of them. It is very clearly the doctrine of Scripture, that of them to whom much is given shall much be required—that great talents involve corresponding responsibility. Mark the Saviour's language in addressing the cities wherein most of his mighty works had been done: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. xi. 21-24.) And to a similar effect are the words of Paul to the Hebrews: "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just re-

compense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will?" (Heb. ii. 2-4.) And if it be thus clearly written in the word that, according to the privileges enjoyed, so is the responsibility of those who enjoy them, and that therefore, in proportion to opportunities neglected and misimproved, is the degree of guilt contracted and consequent condemnation, then there must be peculiar guilt and danger connected with the state of a soul in the circumstances to which reference has now been made.

Yes, let the sinner recollect that the close of seasons of grace finds him in a very different state from what he was when he entered upon them. If still unsaved, he has the less excuse—he has the more guilt upon his head if he has misimproved the time of his visitation. For example, if the late sacramental occasion, during which you were favoured from time to time with the faithful preaching of the word—if that season has passed away without any good impression being made upon your minds—without any saving acquaintance with Christ—without any desires after his salvation, you are now in a very different state from what you would have been had you enjoyed no such opportunities of hearing the word. To former guilt you have added that of slighting and obstinately refusing the salvation which has been urged upon your acceptance. And recollect, in regard to the services even of an ordinary Sabbath, that the day closes upon you in a different state from that in which you were when it began. If this day you shall again retire from the house of God without any saving interest in Christ, you must go with increased guilt—for retiring in such a state implies that you have continued to lend a deaf ear to the solicitations of mercy, and have remained unimpressed by all the truths which have been addressed to you. In these circumstances, the word will only prove the savour of death unto death—will only be instrumental in ministering to that condemnation which, if grace prevent not, will at least be assigned to you as your everlasting portion.

So, too, in regard to the misimprovement of seasons of revival. There is, indeed, special guilt contracted by those who enjoy such seasons, but allow them to pass away without any saving benefit to their souls. And why so? Just because at these times God may be said to speak with sinners more earnestly, and to entreat them more urgently. It is then, too, made more evident what divine grace can accomplish, and at such seasons does the Spirit give more ample demonstration of the power of the truth. To resist all the evidences thus afforded, to shut the eyes

against all the Lord's doings of mercy and of grace, and to close the ears against the Saviour's voice, thus more than usually beseeching—for sinners to do all this is to contract special guilt, and to heap to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

And such things may also be said of those whose souls are still unsaved when nature begins to fail, and when the termination of life appears close at hand. We have seen how it may be said of such that the harvest is past and the summer is ended; and if it has been a summer of privilege, and a harvest in which fruit was to have been expected—if Gospel light has been enjoyed, and the means of grace plentifully afforded, great guilt and danger must have been incurred. It is quite impossible, indeed, to form any estimate of the guilt of that man who has lived all his days in a land of Gospel light, who in early life enjoyed the instructions of godly parents, who was long privileged with the faithful preaching of the Word, who associated with men who feared the Lord, and had the opportunity of witnessing in them the sanctifying influence of the truth, and who has reached old age, or is about to close his earthly career, with a soul still estranged from God and utterly unprepared for eternity. As it is impossible to value the privileges which that man has enjoyed, so we cannot calculate the amount of guilt he has contracted by failing to improve them. Think of these things, ye who are still uninterested in the great salvation. Life must sooner or later close. At no distant period with any of you must death come; and every day that you continue unconcerned about the soul, you are becoming the less prepared for the last enemy's approach, and you are adding to the weight of that vengeance which, unless it be given to you to turn unto the Lord, you must assuredly share with all those who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. I would now, in the *third and last place*, advert for a little to the bitterness and anguish of spirit experienced by the sinner when he is awakened to see that his condition is such as has been now represented. The words of the text are supposed to be uttered by the Israelites themselves, and bitter must have been their disappointment and grief when they were forced to exclaim, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Now, while others may lament and mourn over the situation of those who have sinned away their day of grace, and whose summer and harvest may be said to be past, the feelings thus awakened are nothing to be compared with the feelings of those who for themselves have occasion to take up the language of the text and say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

And here I would appeal in the first instance to you who have already been brought from darkness unto light, and from Satan unto God. When first awakened to know your lost and ruined condition, were you not filled with fear and trembling? and was it not the case that one and a principal source of your mental anguish was, that you had neglected so many precious opportunities of spiritual improvement—that you had abused so many valuable privileges—that you had turned a deaf ear to so many gracious invitations—that when God had spoken to you you had so often refused, and that when he had stretched forth his hand, you had so often disregarded? Was it not the case, that the thought of misspent Sabbaths, and misimproved seasons of spiritual instruction, stung you with the deepest remorse, and filled you with a sense of your exceeding vileness? So long as a sinner remains unconcerned about his soul, he can think of all his abused privileges without the least emotion; but when awakened by the Spirit of God, then he is filled with grief and sorrow of heart. His sins against light and conscience—against invitations and warnings; promises and threatenings are all presented to his view, and become the occasion of an anguish which none but those who have been similarly awakened have ever experienced, and from which he can get no relief until that same Spirit who has aroused him leads him by faith to the peace-speaking blood of the Lamb.

In regard to such as continue to old age, and to the close of a long life, in neglect of privileges and ignorant of the great salvation, how seldom does it happen that they are ever awakened at all. The harvest passes and the summer closes, and they are not in the least concerned about it. The evening of their days is passed just like the morning and the noon—generally, indeed, in a more hardened state. This is just the melancholy effect of a continued abuse of privileges and resistance of offered mercy. The conscience becomes deadened, seared as with a red hot iron, incapable of being in any way impressed. But when in such cases there is any awakening—and, blessed be God, he sometimes brings sinners to himself at the eleventh hour, to the praise and glory of his grace—when a sick and dying bed, or increasing infirmities, are made instrumental in arousing to serious thought, there is just the same bitterness of heart occasioned by a view of the past—thinking of the opportunities which have been enjoyed, but abused, of the many invitations which have been slighted, and warnings which have been despised—remembering, too, that precious opportunities are now lost and gone for ever—that in regard to means long enjoyed, it may truly be said that the harvest is past, and the summer is ended—the soul that is awakened in such circumstances, is filled with the deepest sorrow, and penetrated with the bitterest anguish.

And well, indeed, is it when the sorrow is of a godly sort, working repentance unto salvation not to be repented of—when the anguish of soul is that occasioned by the Spirit of God laying the sinner low in the depths of his misery before placing his feet on the Rock of Ages—for we have heard not unfrequently of those who have been awakened in their latter end to a view of their condition, but apparently only that they might have some foretaste of the misery awaiting them in an eternal world. Oh, how indescribably awful must the condition of that man be who has sinned away the day of grace, and who in the latter end is awakened by natural conscience to some knowledge of his state as a sinner, but without having a single ray of hope imparted to his soul ! How dreadful his agony, when forced to say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved !” He looks back on the past, the many opportunities which he has despised, the many counsels which he has set at nought, the many warnings which he has slighted, the many daring acts of rebellion against a compassionate God of which he has been guilty. He looks forward to the future, and he beholds an undone eternity, he sees the blackness of darkness for ever, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched. And with such a retrospect and such a prospect, his conscience, too, upbraiding him, and charging him with the folly and the wickedness of his having permitted himself to be placed in such a condition as this, Oh ! who can describe, who can form any idea of the anguish which must fill his breast when about to leave the land of the living and the place of hope, he exclaims, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.”

And now, in conclusion, I would press upon all the duty of improving present opportunities. Although much precious time has been misspent, and many valuable privileges despised, yet the summer and harvest are not altogether past. Privileges are not yet entirely removed, and it is still the season in which we may look for showers of the Spirit to refresh the thirsty ground and to cause to grow the seed which is sown. But the season is precarious, it may close very soon and very suddenly. Before we are aware, our privileges may be removed from us, or we from them. Improve, then, present opportunities. “Now is the accepted time, behold this is the day of salvation.” Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” He is still near and still to be found in the preaching of the Gospel and all appointed ordinances. Oh listen, then, and comply now with the gracious invitation addressed to you by a beseeching God. “Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”—
AMEN.

SERMON XCVIII.

BELIEVERS LIVING STONES IN THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

BY THE REV. DAVID CRICHTON, ARBROATH.

“ To whom coming, as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”—1 PETER II. 4-5.

IN tracing the development of the great scheme of redemption, we find a gradual advance from what is sensible to what is spiritual. In the earlier ages, God manifested his presence by tokens which came within the reach of the bodily senses, as in the fire in the bush on Horeb, the pillar that guided Israel through the wilderness, the darkness and thunders of Sinai, and the cloud that filled the tabernacle and the temple. The whole of the Mosaic system consisted of “ carnal ordinances.” A particular house was dedicated to the service of Jehovah, in which sacrifices were offered and other ceremonial rites performed.

All this, however, was preparatory to a more spiritual dispensation, the commencement of which was announced by our blessed Lord, when, in answer to the question of the woman of Samaria, whether Jerusalem or her own city was the place at which the ceremonies of the law should be observed, he, to her surprise, replied, “ Woman, believe me, the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth.” Henceforth no temple was to be specially dedicated to Jehovah, nor was any other victim to bleed after Christ had put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. A dispensation purely spiritual was then introduced, and shall continue till the consummation of all things. The sacred writers, however, who lived after the ministration of the Spirit had begun, and the sensible or ceremonial economy had passed away, often draw from the latter, which had been so long familiar to themselves and many of those whom they addressed, vivid illustrations of those doctrines which they had been commanded to publish throughout the world.

In the text, the union of believers to Christ by faith, and their advancement in holiness, through the influence of his quickening Spirit,

are taught under a figure bold but expressive, taken from the temple and the worship which had been there observed.

The Apostle supposes a spiritual house built on a foundation which is alive, composed of stones, each of which at first receives and constantly derives life from this living foundation, and that by the successive additions of such stones as well as by their subsequent growth or expansion, the edifice is carried onward to its completion. This spiritual fabric is obviously the invisible church—consisting of all whom the Father hath given to the Son to be redeemed, who, from time to time, are called, justified, sanctified, and prepared for the blessedness to which they are destined. When sinners are converted, and believers increase in holiness through grace, derived from their living Redeemer, the whole of this spiritual building, “fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”

In further considering this subject, the following points seem to present themselves.

- I. The foundation.
- II. The materials.
- III. The mode of building.
- IV. The worship.

I. *The foundation.*—The stability and duration of every building depend much on a proper foundation. The Jews well knew that a site had been formed at vast labour and expense for the temple on Mount Zion, by the erection of a wall stupendous in its dimensions from the valley below. Still greater difficulties were to be surmounted before a “living stone” could be provided adequate to support the weight of the spiritual house—a surety qualified to bear the iniquities of all the elect—to secure their deliverance from wrath, and admission to glory.

Had this much been revealed to mankind, and no more, that the great lawgiver was in his grace willing to admit of a substitute in the room of the actual transgressors—the announcement, instead of enkindling their hopes, must have aggravated their despair. They would have been in the unhappy position of a prisoner who is informed that if securities to an amount which it is impossible for him to procure, shall be furnished, he may be set at liberty.

Can earth supply this living foundation stone? No. All mankind are included in the same condemnation. No man can redeem his brother from death, or give a ransom even for his own soul. Can the created universe supply it? No. The highest archangel, when he has employed his exalted powers to the utmost for his Maker’s glory, has done no more than it was his duty to do. He can acquire no merit for himself, far less a superabundance of which others may derive the advan-

tage. He cannot say, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." As it was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin, so we have reason, from the event, to conclude, that the life of any created being, however high in dignity and rank, would have been too mean—too worthless a sacrifice to express the Divine abhorrence of sin, and to atone for the guilt of the innumerable multitude whom it was the gracious purpose of a merciful God to redeem.

He "looked, and there was none to help." He surveyed every province of his empire, but no where could a suitable "stone" be discovered. His eye was lifted above the rank of created beings. He set forth his own Son to be a propitiation for sin. He laid help upon one mighty to save. A victim, of Divine dignity, whose precious blood is of infinite worth, was provided. The sword of justice was awakened, not against a mere mortal, but against the man who was Jehovah's fellow. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

Without pausing to adduce other proofs, the stability of this foundation must be inferred from the fact, that it is laid by the hand of Jehovah himself, who knows the pressure to which it will be subjected, and all the forces by which, at any period, it can possibly be tried. A human architect, of penetrating genius and comprehensive views, may, after all his exertions, fail to secure a permanent basis for the structure which he rears. How can he provide against the earthquake's shock, which, in a moment, is to shiver into fragments the solid rock on which he had built with unwavering confidence, and lay the magnificent edifice, which he expected to stand for ages, in ruins on the ground? But the great Governor of the universe knew all that was required for the vindication of his character, as holy and righteous in all his ways, and for the satisfaction of his justice. The Saviour, whom he, in infinite wisdom, has commissioned, must be able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God through him.

We stop not to point out particularly what Christ hath actually done to afford a foundation for the hopes of believing sinners. Suffice it to say, that "by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." In him believers are complete—he is "of God made unto them"—all that they need—"wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

He is truly a *living stone*. He died to atone for their guilt—he lives to plead the merits of his sacrifice, and to dispense to them the blessings which are the costly purchase of his blood. To the uttermost—the re-

motest time, as well as the greatest extent of guilt, he is able to save. He that hath the Son, hath life—believers in Jesus can never perish. His own life must be destroyed, which is an utter impossibility, before the life of one of his people can be taken away. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ Jesus." The day when all shall appear before the judgment seat will prove the worthlessness of other grounds on which sinners build their hopes. But, when horror and alarm shall seize all who have lived and died without Christ—when, like the terrified inhabitants of a city about to be swallowed up by a volcanic eruption, they perceive every thing that was once deemed solid melting from beneath their feet—those who have built on the sure foundation, the living stone which God's own hand hath laid in Zion, shall be perfectly safe and tranquil. Who shall lay any thing to their charge? They cannot come into condemnation—"He that believeth on him, shall not be confounded."

Might it not have been expected that sinners would hasten to build on a foundation so secure—that they would flee without a moment's delay to a Saviour thus all sufficient? So far is this from being the case, that "he is disallowed of men."

Some deny the existence, some the necessity of this foundation; while some give a preference to one of their own selection. Is not Christ disallowed by the infidels and scoffers, who deny the truth of God's word; of which, nevertheless, they are themselves living proofs, for in it their appearance in the last days is plainly foretold? Is he not disallowed by Socinians, who deny his divinity, and refuse to admit that his death had any atoning efficacy? Is he not disallowed by those who go about to establish a righteousness of their own, or who would degrade the Saviour by representing his death as merely supplementing the defects in their own fancied obedience? Is he not disallowed by those who assume the name of builders (office-bearers) in his church, but who set aside his word as the only rule of faith, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, or otherwise oppose his spiritual kingdom? Is he not disallowed by civil rulers, when they interfere with the liberties of his people by persecution in its grosser or more refined forms, by preventing, in so far as their power extends, the conducting of the affairs of his church by the rules which he has prescribed and the officers whom he hath appointed for that purpose? To speak even of granting toleration to the true Church of Christ, is to insult and dishonour him. How would an earthly master feel were one of his servants to affect great condescension and special kindness in permitting another to perform the work assigned him in compliance with his own command? Christ is the "King of kings,"

the Prince of the kings of the earth, who are his ministers for good—in short, his servants in their own department. Christ is the King of saints. Believers are also his servants; and if the mightiest potentate in the world encroaches on the liberty of the least among them all, or talks of tolerating obedience to the Great Master, is not His supreme authority contemned?

Is he not also disallowed by every careless sinner, who, “minding earthly things,” neglects the great salvation?

Is he not disallowed by such as have the form of godliness without its power—who in words honour, but in works deny him? By these and many others of mankind Christ is disallowed? Does this detract in any degree from his excellence? No. In ordinary affairs objects are accounted valuable or worthless, not according to the estimate of the ignorant, but of competent judges. Who is best qualified to judge of the worth of Christ? The infinite God by whom alone all his excellence can be fully understood. No man knoweth the Son but the Father, in whose sight he is “precious”—his chosen or elect, in whom his soul delighteth. The ignorant savage prefers the painted glass-bead, or other showy trifle, to the wedge of gold; but the intelligent European knows well that the value of the latter is incomparably superior. While the unbelieving, whom the god of this world hath blinded, so that they call good evil, and evil good, and weary themselves in their favourite pursuits for very vanity, see no beauty in Christ; those whose minds have been enlightened by the Spirit of God appreciate his worth. Faith enables them to form a just, although an inadequate, estimate of the glory of the Redeemer's person, the greatness of his work, and the benefits which he confers on his people. “Unto you who believe he is precious.” In proportion to the degree in which the believer is renewed in his mind, and made to resemble God will, his estimate of the Saviour increase.

Although still despised and rejected of men, Christ is precious in the judgment of the Father, and that of the holiest and most exalted of created beings. For, hear the song of praise that bursts from the heavenly choir, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Although set aside by multitudes of mankind, in their folly and their ignorance, yet, by the highest authority in the universe, the stone laid in Zion is declared to be a sure foundation.

II. *The materials.*—These, in the figurative language of the text, are “lively stones.” “To whom coming as to a living stone, ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house.” The materials of which the invisible church is composed, are sinners originally dead, but who come unto Christ that they may have life. The stone would forever remain em-

bedded in the earth or in the quarry, were no agency employed to search it out and bring it to the place which it is designed to occupy in the building. So sinners would continue to have their conversation in the world, were they not sought out by the Spirit of Christ, convinced of sin and made willing, nay, eagerly desirous, to be washed in the fountain of his blood. "No man cometh unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." There is no motion in the sinner's soul towards Christ till it is produced by the Holy Ghost. The truth, however clearly presented to the mind, can be obeyed only through the Spirit.

Although not confined to any instrumentality, yet the preaching of the word, and other divinely appointed ordinances, and the dispensations of Providence, are the means through which, by the accompanying influence of the Spirit, sinners are brought to Jesus. The stone suffers a kind of violence in being separated from the earth or the rock, and cut by the tool of the workman, so as to become fit for the place which the builder intends it to occupy. It was when trembling during an alarming providence that the Philippian jailor asked with the energy of despair, "What must I do to be saved?" In like manner disease, loss of property, or of dear friends, disappointment in worldly pursuits, painful convictions of sin, appalling fears of coming wrath, are often the sharp instruments by which the Spirit works on the unrenewed soul until it is humbled, and the sinner is made willing in the day of his power.

The dead man cannot infuse life into his body, nor can the unrenewed sinner, by any efforts of his own, become spiritually alive. "The Son hath life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will." It is to him every one must come that he may become a lively stone. It is not enough to know of Christ—to be baptised in his name—to observe his ordinances; unless there is actually union to him by new faith, there has been no transition from death to life. It matters not how near the stone is brought to the foundation, unless it is built upon it. The builder displays skill, when he turns the most unlikely materials to advantage. How adorable is the wisdom of Christ in transforming some of the most depraved of mankind into the brightest ornaments of his Church. The contrast is not more surprising between the rude block in the quarry, and the rich and graceful capital, than between the licentious idolater of Corinth and the same individual as a member of the church in that city adorned with the beauties of holiness. "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Every soul that is converted is a living stone added to the foundation. All that the Father hath given to the Son shall come to him; and when the

last of the elect shall have been gathered in, the spiritual temple will be complete, and the shout arise, "Grace, grace, unto it."

III. *The mode of building.*—The temple at Jerusalem was the work of many years. The language of the text, "Ye are built up," implies that it is also by a gradual process that the spiritual house is to be completed.

While the whole of the Church is a temple, every one of its members is also a temple, an habitation of God through the spirit. The sanctification of a single believer, and the perfecting of all the saints, are works that are performed not instantaneously but progressively. The stone at first receives, and must constantly draw its life from the foundation. "Now I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." By the grace of Christ imparted to him from time to time, the believer advances in holiness. Nor should you ever rest satisfied with any present attainment. There is an observed tendency in professing, nay, in true Christians, after the awful season of alarm and painful conviction is over, and they are persuaded of their safety through the Redeemer, to fall into a state of indolence and relaxation. They neglect to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. They lose their first love, become at ease in Zion, and are barren and unfruitful, instead of abounding in the work of the Lord. You conclude that some thing is amiss if an ordinary building remains stationary. All is not well if you can mark no growth in grace in yourselves. You find in ordinary cases, that a building in course of erection has reached a higher point to-day than it had attained yesterday. At the last observation, the germ of some architectural decoration was barely discernable, and now it is unfolded in its full proportions—in all its richness and beauty—while others have elsewhere begun to make their appearance. In like manner, from time to time, the graces of the Christian should increase in vigour and in number. Let every one examine himself, not only if he be in the faith, but if he is departing from iniquity and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Do you love sin less, and Christ more? Is your faith stronger—your repentance deeper—your obedience to the divine will more unreserved, and your resemblance to the Divine image more complete? What evil propensity have you in the strength of God uprooted from your heart—what sinful indulgence have you abandoned in your life—what new beauties now adorn, or shine with a brighter radiance in your character? Every image employed in Scripture to describe the life of a believer, implies the idea of progress. It is compared to the light shining from the dimness of the morning twilight more and more brightly to the perfect day—to the seed slowly and imperceptibly rising up into the tree whose

branches spread far and wide—to the race in which the competitor by step after step, with untiring energy, presses onwards to the goal ; and in the text, to a building, stone by stone, rising upwards till the height required shall be attained.

Does any one class himself with the “ righteous ? ”—let him test his claim “ by holding on his way.” Does he regard himself as born again ?—let him examine if he is becoming more spiritually minded, and growing up a holy temple to the Lord.

The spiritual house regarded as the whole Church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood, is also built up gradually during a period which has already extended over many ages and centuries. It is not, however, always easy to mark the stages of its advancement. It would be unsafe to judge of the progress of the spiritual house from the countenance given to the church by princes, the great, the wealthy, or the influential in society ; for thus true religion has often been injured and corruption fostered. The numbers who profess the religion of Jesus are no sure test of the growth of the church invisible. Instances have occurred in which nearly the whole inhabitants of a country have been in the communion of the church, while it was manifest that vital godliness was almost extinct, and that deadness and decay generally prevailed.

Is the church strengthened by the addition of persons like Simon Magus, who make a profession of religion for the purpose of gain ; or like Ananias or Sapphira, who court the reputation of liberality and sanctity, while secretly providing for their carnal enjoyment ? Is the church increased by the Demases who, when their temporal interests are in peril, forsake Christ for the present evil world ?—by Sardians, who have a name to live, but are dead. No. The building receives no addition but from *living* stones. Nominal Christians mar the progress of the Gospel. The dead carry an atmosphere around them which it is dangerous for the living to breathe. Rubbish carefully painted may resemble a stone ; but, if admitted into the wall, it is an element not of strength but of weakness. These professors, who have no more than the form of godliness, tend to keep the state of religion low, and by their influence and example prove injurious to God’s own people. In mercy, therefore, does he send dispensations to sift and to try, and to separate the genuine from the pretended. Such seasons ought to be regarded with thankfulness, as contributing to the progress of the spiritual temple of Jehovah. Its walls have often been built in troublous times. Sinners have been converted and saints edified, when the arm of power has been stretched forth to vex the faithful—when the flames have consumed their bodies at the stake, and the sword has been made drunk in their blood. Not that persecution is itself favourable to religion ; but the King of Zion pours contempt on the puny efforts of

sinful men to frustrate his great design. By reviving his cause, when they hoped to crush if not to extirpate it entirely, he shows that he will work, and none can let—that his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. From a wider range than that out of which Solomon collected the materials of the Jewish temple is he gathering the stones of his spiritual house. A cloud of witnesses had died in the faith before his incarnation. By his personal ministry many were converted—one on the cross itself. Through the instrumentality of his apostles, multitudes were added to the church of such as shall be saved. Living stones were gathered from the shores of the lake of Galilee, the plains of Asia, the vales of Italy, and the far-famed cities of Greece. In our own days, they have been sought and found, from “Greenland’s icy mountains to India’s coral strand,” and the beauteous islands that stud the ocean of the south. It hath pleased the Great Master-builder to supply us with fresh and signal proofs that his work is still in progress, that his Spirit has lost none of His resistless energy, and that the Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. Must we look to distant ages or climes for the evidence that the spiritual house is growing by the addition of living stones? Are there none before me to whom I may safely say, “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins?” If not, you have cause to tremble; for, have you not all a name to live? If any of you are still in a state of spiritual death, may the Spirit breathe upon these slain, that they may live. In our own land, and in the present age, there have not been wanting tokens of the quickening power of the Spirit which have forced themselves upon public attention. The erection of Solomon’s temple proceeded noiselessly, no sound of axe or of hammer being heard; and there is reason to believe that, by the divine blessing on the instructions of the parent, the teacher, the minister, and other instrumentality, the work of Christ is advancing amongst us, even amidst abounding infidelity and irreligion. Of all the events which are following each other with ceaseless rapidity, and startling the world, there is not one which is not directly or indirectly contributing to the advancement of the Redeemer’s mediatorial work. Every influence, whether friendly or adverse, that can be made to bear upon his people is under his control. A treacherous Pharaoh, an ambitious Sennacherib, a benignant Cyrus, is, whether willingly or unwillingly, an instrument in his hand, employed in carrying into execution his gracious design, which shall in his own time be fully accomplished. “The man whose name is the Branch shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.”

V. *The worship.*—The figure now changes from the temple to the

worship there celebrated. Believers are represented as a holy priesthood offering up in the spiritual temple spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Under the Mosaic dispensation, a particular family was selected out of the whole nation of Israel to minister in holy things. Christians are a chosen generation—separated in the exercise of God's sovereign mercy from the whole of mankind to show forth his praise. The priests of Aaron's line were said to be sanctified, or made typically holy by certain ceremonies, among which were washing with water, anointing with oil, and the putting on of peculiar vestments. They were not necessarily holy in heart and life. Christians are justified by the blood and renewed in their minds by the Spirit of Christ. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." They wear the robe of Christ's righteousness, and are adorned with the graces of the Spirit. The typical priesthood were wholly occupied in sacred duties. It is not to be supposed, however, that Christ's true disciples are to abstain from engaging in lawful worldly pursuits. They may be "not slothful in business," yet "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." But, whatever may be their employments, whether they are occupied with the farm or merchandise, they are to do all to the glory of God. His they are, and Him they serve. The priests under the law were admitted to close communion with God. The fellowship of believers is with the Father, to whom they have access through the Mediator of the new covenant. They are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. No veil keeps them at a distance from the mercy-seat. By a new and living way, they draw nigh, with humble boldness, to the throne of grace for pardon of sin and needful succour. The Father is well pleased with the Son, and they are accepted in the beloved. They are allowed not only to plead for themselves, but for others. The priests blessed the people; and true Christians, by their prayers, draw down blessings even on the heads of the ungodly. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Little do the wicked consider when they hate, reproach, and harass the people of God, that they are injuring their best friends, and madly endeavouring to shut up the channels through which their own mercies often flow. The Jewish priests had no inheritance in the land given to the nation for a possession. The Lord was their portion. The people of God have here no continuing city. Earthly things, although allowed them for their use, are not their portion. The Lord is their inheritance. They weep as though they wept not—they buy as though they possessed not. While the worldly seek their happiness from some temporal source, their language is, "Lord lift thou upon us

the light of thy countenance." "Whom have we in heaven but thee?" "God is the strength of our heart and our portion for ever."

It was the business of the priests under the law to offer material sacrifices. These were of two kinds—the one expiatory or for atonement; the other expressing thankfulness or dedication.

The bloody sacrifices were offered for the atonement of transgression but, being only types of the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, are no longer to be presented. It would be dishonouring to Christ to offer any sacrifice with a view to the expiation of guilt. So great is the efficacy of the offering which he made of himself to God, that no other is required. He hath not left his work imperfect. "There remaineth," because there needeth, "no more sacrifice for sin." To attempt by fastings, penances, or pecuniary benefactions, to propitiate the favour of God, is the greatest impiety. Having purged our sins, as a proof that his work is finished, Christ hath for ever sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The unbloody offerings presented at Pentecost and on other occasions, were expressive of gratitude for past mercies, and voluntary dedication to the Most High. For this class of sacrifices there is still ample scope under the Gospel dispensation. The great scheme of mercy is now more fully unfolded, and the privileges to which God's people are now admitted are vastly greater than those enjoyed by ancient Israel.

1. Believers are to dedicate themselves to the Lord. They are his by an indisputable right; but it is incumbent upon them cheerfully to admit his claim, by a willing surrender of every faculty of their minds and of their bodies, to be employed according to his will for the promotion of his glory. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Is it asked, how can this be a spiritual sacrifice when the body alone is mentioned? It is plain that the soul is also included. The body is but the instrument in carrying out the purposes of the mind. It is not the eye, any more than the telescope, that sees, but the mind employing one or both, to attain its object. So, under the promptings of the renewed soul, the members become the instruments of righteousness unto God. No right was reserved by the worshipper in that sacrifice which was devoted to the altar. Nothing must be spared; no reserve must be made of a difficult duty, or a favourite indulgence. The flesh must be wholly crucified with its affections and lusts. There must be a willingness to endure every affliction, however severe, and to proceed in the path presented by God, however steep or rugged. The question is not, How shall I best consult my feelings, my ease, my temporal comfort? but, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When in every thought, word, and action, there is a pre-eminent regard

to the authority and honour of God, we offer him a spiritual sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Of this unreserved dedication, a beautiful example is afforded by the Apostle of the Gentiles, who could say, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

2. Repentance. It is not by tears of penitence, but the precious blood of Christ, that sin can be washed away. Yet to sorrow after a godly sort, to be self-abased under a consciousness of transgression, is a sacrifice pleasing to the Most High. The true penitent honours the rectitude of the Divine law by mourning over its violation. A humbling sense of our own sinfulness, and a sincere grief for remaining corruption, are pleasing to God, for they are the fruits of his own grace. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise."

3. Faith. There is no sin so heinous as unbelief. What greater insult can be offered to the God of truth than to call him a liar? On the contrary, he is honoured by implicit faith. It is obviously one great object of the probationary state in which we are placed on earth, to prove and to try us whether we will trust him, even when we know not the reasons of his procedure. He has often conferred special marks of favour on those who have not staggered through unbelief, in dark and mysterious dispensations. Abraham went out from his country and his home, without knowing whither he went—giving implicit credit to the divine promise, and unreserved obedience to the divine command. Therefore was he called the friend of God. Faith, when, like fine gold, it stands the fiery trial, is pleasing in his sight, being found "to his praise, and honour, and glory."

4. Prayer. You do honour to an earthly friend by applying to him for aid in some great emergency. You show your confidence in his generosity. So you offer to the Lord a sacrifice of a sweet savour when you feel your constant need of his grace, and, confiding in his ability and willingness to bestow, you cast yourselves as suppliants before his throne, and ask out of his fulness the supply of all your necessities. But take care that you offend not him who requires a spiritual sacrifice, by offering him dead, formal petitions, and provoke him in anger, to say to you, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

5. Praise. You honour God when you are filled with exalted thoughts of his excellence and gratitude for his mercies. His people are "formed for himself, that they may shew forth his praise." "Whoso offereth

praise glorifieth me." "By him let us therefore offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

6. Deeds of beneficence. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. If acts of kindness are performed, or alms bestowed, from mere instinctive sympathy, like that which prompts the hen to gather her chickens under her wings, or from the love of ostentation, or as the purchase-money of heaven, the offering will be rejected with abhorrence. But the cup of cold water given by a believer through love to Christ, is a sacrifice pleasing in the sight of God. Not only the prayers but the alms of the devout Cornelius came up for a memorial before God. The converts on the day of Pentecost shewed their devotedness to Him who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, by a cheerful surrender of their worldly goods for the service of his poor afflicted people. "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

7. Holy obedience. To love the law of the Lord after the inward man—to run in the way of his commandments with an enlarged heart, is to present to him an acceptable spiritual sacrifice. "Offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."

Even during the ceremonial dispensation, it was not enough to perform the commanded acts of worship unless these were accompanied by the state of mind which God required. Under the ministration of the Spirit, this is still more indispensable. Did the Lord say even to those who, with scrupulous exactness, brought the lamb and the bullock to his altar, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" Must he not reject, with equal displeasure, the formal prayer, however frequent—the praises which flow only from the lip—the attendance on his public ordinances, however regular, while the heart is given not to Him, but to the world—while, amidst outward solemnity, the soul is sunk in apathetic coldness or indifference, and, it may be, the very thoughts wandering away to the scenes of the past or the schemes of the future.

Who, then, it may be asked, shall ascend to the hill of God? What hope can any one entertain, that his offering shall be accepted? The services of true believers, although imperfect and mingled with sin, shall be acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. The Father is ever well pleased with his son, and will reject no gift, however worthless in itself, that is presented by his hand.

Humble, timid follower of the Lamb, if thou drawest near to God by the new and living way, consecrated through the blood of his Son, with a true heart and in full assurance of faith, fear no repulse. Per-

fumed with the incense of Christ's atonement and intercession, thy spiritual sacrifices, defective and polluted in themselves, shall rise like a sweet memorial before the throne, and, thou mayest hope, will also draw down an increase of grace by which thou mayest become more meet for the society of the saints in light.

On what foundation are you building your hopes for eternity? Some, we fear, were they to answer this question, must say, "On none." The present occupies all their thoughts—the future is kept entirely out of view. A moment's reflection should convince you, however, that there your great interest lies. Let the solemn statement command your attention ere it be too late: "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him." Commit your souls to Christ—build upon that sure foundation.

We fear there are many who readily admit, yet in practice overlook, the truth that God is a Spirit, and requires a spiritual service. His eye, like a flame of fire, penetrates into the secret motives of every one of his professing worshippers. As he distinguished the different characters of the two brothers, Cain and Abel, so he knows, in the largest assembly, the formal, the earthly-minded, the unbelieving, from those who with broken and contrite hearts serve him in spirit and in truth. Let every one exercise a godly jealousy over himself, and enquire into the state of his heart and affections. If you are members of the visible church, examine whether ye are also living stones in the spiritual house—joined to Christ by that faith which purifieth the heart and worketh by love. Do you come before the Lord as his people come, engaging in the same prayers, and swelling the same songs of praise? See if you are really of their number—if you are "renewed in the spirit of your minds," a holy priesthood, offering him spiritual sacrifices on earth, and who shall serve him day and night in the temple above.

You, who are already united to the Saviour by a true faith, seek to be built up more and more in holiness. How carnal is the most spiritually minded! How much unbelief mingles with the strongest faith! How scanty the fruits of righteousness even where they most abound! Seek larger supplies of grace, which usually are communicated according to the diligent use of means. Wait on the Lord that ye may renew your strength. Strive after a nearer resemblance to Christ, and when he who is your life shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory.

SERMON XCIX.

THE LAW OF THE HOUSE.

BY THE REV. H. M'BRYDE BROWN, LOCHMABEN.

"Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings-out thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house: Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house."—EZEKIEL XLIII. 10-12.

THE prophet Ezekiel had fallen upon evil-days, days of deep declension from the faith and piety of former times. Where now the blessedness that once was spoken of—when in Judah God was known—his name was great in Israel—in Salem was his tabernacle—his dwelling-place in Zion?—when it was said, "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is a people like unto thee, O people, saved of the Lord?" Ah, write on that fairest page of Jewish history, Ichabod, the glory is departed!

A melancholy change had taken place—a wide departure from the faith and worship of their fathers. It is implied, indeed, in the language of the text, where it is brought up as matter of reproach and shame, that a people so privileged should have acted so unworthily. They had declined from the "old paths"—"the good way" of truth and righteousness in which their fathers walked. They had lapsed into the idolatries of the surrounding nations. They had incurred, in consequence, the deep displeasure of that God who will not suffer it that men depart in anything from that which constitutes his proper service.

It was under these circumstances that the prophet was commanded to appear on the behalf of God in presence of the people, and having testified against their manifold and great defections, to call them to repentance and amendment. Then, to ensure the greater success of his mission, he was instructed to exhibit the pattern of the true Temple, the form thereof, and the fashion thereof, the goings-out thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the laws thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and to write them up in presence of the people—that they might ever be before their face; so that, fully instructed, faithfully informed, of all the rites and sacred service, they might in all things be

regulated by the express letter of the Law, and thus render unto God a true and acceptable worship ;—which otherwise they could not do. No, my friends, unless our worship of the Lord, both in the faith professed, and in the form observed, be just according to the Word, it cannot be accepted. It is but *will-worship*, the mere imagination and device of men. The word of God must yield at once the warrant and the rule. To do God service worthily, we must worship him in spirit and in truth ; and of everything pertaining to obedience and belief, we must be able to say, “This is the law of the house. Behold, this is the law of the house.”

In proceeding with my subject, I shall endeavour, humbly depending on the grace of God, to set before you the pattern of the true temple, as exhibited in the Word. In doing so, and in order to the fuller opening of my subject, I shall, at the outset, lay it down as a first and fundamental principle,—what may be regarded as an axiom in Christianity, that a church to be rightly constituted must be Scriptural. It must be formed and fashioned after the pattern of the true temple—founded not on the authority of man—not on the traditions of the elders—not on the opinions of the fathers—not on the decrees of princes or of popes—not on the acts and statutes of the realm, but on Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. In short, we must be able to say and show respecting it, “This is the law of the house. Behold, this is the law of the house.”

It follows from the very nature, institute, and objects of a Christian Church. Its nature—that is spiritual. Its institute—that is divine. Its ends—glory to God in the advancement of the immortal interests of man.

From all of which it may be argued, and at any length, that a church rightly to be constituted, must be Scriptural. The Bible—that must be its statute-book. The register of heaven—that must form the record and the rule. The word of God—that must be the warrant of our worship and our faith. The everything connected with the institution and administration of the church—its faith, and forms, and rites, and solemn services, must be as it is written, just because it is written, apart from, and independent of, the interference of any other principle, or polity, or power. Nor prince, nor pope, nor prelatist may dictate how we shall worship, or what we shall believe. In our religious observance and belief we must stand, and simply stand, upon “the Word.” It must be the Bible—the Bible only—the Bible wholly, which must form the basis of our Church and of our creed. Laying our hand upon this volume, and recognising in it a revelation of the mind of God, we must say, “This is the law of the house. Behold, this is the law of the house.”

Otherwise it cannot be the house or church of Christ, if Christ be not the lawgiver and lord. It loses its distinctive character. The moment you admit the interference of an earthly power, you reduce it to the stature of an earthly institute. You make it of the earth, earthy. It is no more the ordinance of Christ; it is the institute of Cæsar; and hence it is, as we have said, a first and fundamental principle touching the character and constitution of a Christian church, that it be scriptural. To be a *church of Christ at all*, how obvious it is that Christ's law must be the law—Christ's word must be the rule—Christ's will must be the warrant—Christ's authority must be supreme. Lord of his own house, he must order its affairs—lawgiver of his own people, the law must be taken from his mouth. The minister of the sanctuary—by him its various rites and ceremonies must be prescribed. The master of its assemblies—he must preside in all the meeting of the saints. In a word, the church, to be a Church of Christ, must be according to the mind of Christ; and of its doctrine, discipline, worship, government, it must be said and shown, "This is the law of the house; behold, this is the law of the house."

A church, to be a church of Christ, and rightly constituted, must be scriptural. That point proved, we press the obvious inference, that in Scripture we must find the warrant, and from Scripture we must plead the rule. The rites and institutes of men, however wise, expedient, or politic, will not suffice. In vain shall we teach for doctrines the commandments of men—in vain appeal to the traditions of the elders, if we cannot appeal to the "law and to the prophets." In vain shall we assert the authority of the fathers, if we cannot alledge the "oracles of God." "The Lord is our king," "The Lord is our lawgiver;" and if we believe not, obey not, worship not, according to his word, it is but will-worship and idolatry, a mere carnal ordinance, legal service, beggarly elements.

You see it, then, and to conviction, that a church to be according to the pattern of the true temple, must be according to the mind of Christ. It must be scriptural, and out of Scripture we must bring the ground and warrant of our Christian faith and worship. This much is asserted and established in the language of the text. It is there proved, and most conclusively, that everything connected with the house or church of Christ, down to the goings out and comings in thereof, must be according to the letter of the law. We must be able to say and show respecting *all* the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, "This is the law of the house; behold, this is the law of the house."

This we shall attempt, and in the order here observed. And, *first* of

all, in reference to the "forms thereof," "the goings out thereof," and "comings in thereof." These have respect to the outer order of the sanctuary—to the solemnity, reverence, decorum, requisite in every thing connected with the service of the temple. Our comings to, attendance on, and goings from the house of God, even these may not be overlooked. Among the lesser sanctities, if I may use the term, they have their place and their importance, assisting as they do to solemnize the mind, and give to our assemblies the air and the behaviour of "meetings of the saints." Thus, in Israel of old, the utmost order was observed. Men worshipped then as underneath the eye of an observing God. They realized in thought a present and presiding Deity. They felt upon their spirit a deep and solemnizing sense of sacred things. What holy fear—what heartfelt reverence—what sacred, still tranquillity! It ever should be thus. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him." It should be here as in the upper sanctuary. The church on earth should be as though it were the miniature of that which is in heaven; and men, on coming in and looking round, struck with the sacred aspect of the scene, should be constrained to say, "Surely God is in this place. This is none other than the house of God. It is the gate of heaven."

Then see, my friends, that heed be given to the outward things as well—your "goings out" and "comings in," that all "be done decently and in order," and that ye wait upon the Lord in the exercise of those sentiments of mind which are becoming us as worshippers of the most High God. Ever as ye ascend the mount of ordinances, say to the world and all earthly things, Sit ye down there until we go up, and wait upon the Lord. Call in each wayward thought; restrain each wandering look; and let your souls and all that is within you be stirred up to seek the Lord. Ye servants of the most High God, worship before him in "the beauty of holiness;" rendering up a spiritual service, pure praise, and an acceptable homage. "This is the law of the house; behold, this is the law of the house."

In the *second* place, let me direct attention to the ordinances of the house. By these, you will understand the appointments of the Lord the King, relative to the rites and ceremonies of our religious worship. They are of two kinds, viewed in reference to the common or the Christian world. Common they are in reference to the first; sealing they are in reference to the second. Under the former, we enumerate praise, prayer, the reading of the word, the preaching of the word. Under the latter, we enumerate the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's-supper.

Looking to the Record, it is enacted and ordained, that "the people praise him—that all the people praise him—kings of the earth, and all people—princes of the earth, and all judges—young men and maidens—old men and children—that they praise the Lord." And, finding it thus written in the law, we must enter his gates with "praise," his temple with thanksgiving, and mingle all grateful and all earthly honours with the nobler strains which swell the sanctuary above.

Again, looking to the Record, we find it written, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find." "I will that men pray everywhere." "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." And acting on the letter of the law, we must around the altar of the sanctuary bow the knee of our hearts unto the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and, from this our house of prayer, send up in concert with the saints each Sabbath-day the voice of supplication in sweet memorial before the throne of God.

And thus, on reading in the law, I find it written to the same effect of all the other ordinances. Of one and all of them, it may be said, that they are enacted and ordained, and ought in consequence to be acknowledged, honoured, and obeyed. No church can be conducted according to the mind of Christ when they are not in common and in constant use. No man can be a Christian after the example of Christ who is not in the holy and habitual observation of them. To live in disobedience or neglect of them, unless where a necessity of circumstance exists, is to incur a very aggravated guilt. It is in sacred things to lead a lawless life, setting at naught the high authority of Christ, and trampling under foot his sovereign will. What Christ the King hath ruled, that we must carefully and conscientiously observe and do. What he hath specially enacted and ordained, we may not at our peril disobey. Oh! it will be more tolerable for the men of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for many, very many in our day and in our land—the land of light and largest privilege; the men who never praise—who never pray—who desecrate the Sabbath—despise its sacred services, and live as if there were no sanctuary, no sacrament, no Sabbath-day at all! Unhappy, miserable men, the time is coming when they will regret and bitterly the evil of their ways. The hour will speedily be here when it will prove as wormwood and as gall to look upon the past. Oh! how will it pierce them to the heart to think upon the worthless, wasted lives which they have led! How will it thrust a sting into their souls when all their Sabbaths are gone by, and all their opportunities for ever past! How will it aggravate their doom that they themselves have done it—none but they! What tears! what anguish of remorse! when cast into that place when they shall hear no more the Sabbath bell—nor look upon the house of God—nor listen to

the overtures of mercy and of peace. Would that the prospect of their coming misery did lead them, ere it be too late, to think upon their ways—the sin of them—the shame of them—the sorrow consequent—and timeously turn back to God—to hope—to happiness—to heaven.

My friends and brethren, be it otherwise, far otherwise with you. I pray you to observe and do the things commanded in the Word. Obedient to its heavenly admonitions, be ever found walking in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless. Your Sabbaths sacredly observe. Days of delight, and honourable, and precious let them be—seasons of sweet communion with your God, and spent throughout in Sabbath-day employments—none but these;—earnests and foretastes of that heavenly Sabbath let them be, when, in the temple of the skies, ye shall celebrate and serve your Saviour God, without imperfection—without interruption—without end.

In the *third* place, allow me to request attention to the laws of Christ's house. These are his statutes and decrees in reference to the rule and government thereof. They may be considered either in regard to Christ, his royalties and rights as King, or to ourselves, our powers and privilege, as freemen of the Lord.

And first of all, it is enacted and ordained, that Christ shall be the King and Head of his own house. I look into the law and find it written, "The government shall be upon his shoulders." "He is far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and all things are put under his feet, and it is given him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body." And on the strength of these and similar authorities, we set it forth as a first and fundamental law of the house, touching the prerogatives and regal rights of Christ the King, that it is his, and his alone, to order, institute, ordain—to give the law, in short, respecting every thing connected with the doctrine, discipline, worship, government of his own Church. This is the law, behold this is the law of the house, that Christ on Zion hill sits sovereign and alone—Lord of the conscience—Master of our creed—in matters spiritual, supreme.

Again, it is enacted and ordained in reference to ourselves, that every man is answerable to Christ for his religious belief. I look into the Record and I find it ruled, "Call no one master upon earth. One is your master, even Christ." I look again and find it written, "Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good." "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." I look again, "So then every one shall give account of himself to God." And on the force of these authorities, I am clear to say, this is a law of the house, that every man think for himself—judge for himself—decide for himself, in matters of religious

belief. Let there be perfect liberty, fullest freedom, influence, or interference—none beyond the influence of reason, righteousness, and truth. This is the glorious principle of private judgment—a leading tenet of the Reformation—the glory and distinction of the Protestant—man's noblest right and privilege as a moral and immortal being, to be responsible to God alone in things pertaining to his conscience and his creed. It is a law of the house—behold this, too, is a law of the house, that every man be permitted to stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ the Lord hath made him free to judge and to determine for himself in matters of religious faith.

Again, it is enacted and ordained, that it pertains to a Christian people to elect their office-bearers. It pertains of right, that right conferred by Christ freely and equally on one and all; a blood-bought privilege it is, which no man may relinquish and none usurp, as he shall answer to the Lord. For thus I find it written in the law, upon the ground of principle, "Try the spirits"—"Beware of false prophets"—"Wherefore of these men that have companied with us, must one be ordained,"—and they appointed—"Look out among yourselves,"—and they chose. And on the point of practice, I find, on looking to the records of the Church, both in the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas, and in the election of the deacons, the Christian congregation gave their voice—"They appointed"—"They chose." And all along, the history of the Church for centuries, this was the method uniformly adopted in the settlement of Christian charges. So that, to use the language of the learned Turretine, "Antiquity judged as it were with one voice, that all such elections were void, as wanted the conscience and consent of the people." And in the words of Principal Rule, "Nothing of church order is more clearly, and frequently, and unanimously, in the writings of the ancients, and did all along continue untaken away, even in the degenerate ages of the church, than the people's choosing their own pastors." And with our eye on these authorities, we are confident in asserting that "This is a law of the house—behold this is a law of the house," that to the members of a Christian congregation, it of right belongs to elect their Christian office-bearers.

Again, it is enacted and ordained, that the affairs of Christ's house shall be conducted in his absence by ordinary officers—these being elected in the manner we have described. I look into the law, and find it written, "Having ascended up on high, he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers." And again, "God hath set in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that helps, governments." Such is a description of the various officers of the house of Christ; on which, I may remark, that they are of two kinds, ordinary and extraordinary—

being of such sort as is suited to the state and exigency of the Church. Apostles, prophets, and evangelists—these were extraordinary, so called because indued with extraordinary powers and gifts, such as healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy. They were appointed by the immediate authority and designation of Christ for extraordinary ends. These ends being to make known a revelation of his mind—to settle the affairs and constitution of the Church—and to commit the oversight and administration thereof to ordinary and permanent officers. These ends being accomplished, the house of Christ was afterwards and still is conducted by ordinary rulers, such as pastors, teachers, helps, governments; or, classified according to their several functions, powers, and offices after the Presbyterian polity, under the three following orders—pastors, elders, deacons. The office of the pastor, besides the general care and service of the Church, being to undertake the oversight and superintendence of the flock in matters spiritual, such as the dispensation of the word, and prayer, and sacrament—the exercise of discipline—visitation of the sick, and other offices of piety in public and in private. The office of the elder, to adopt the language of the Church, is, “1. To sit in session, and assist in the administration of discipline, and in the spiritual government of the Church. 2. To take a careful oversight of the people’s morals and religious principles, of the attendance upon public ordinances, and of the state of personal and family religion. 3. To visit the sick from time to time in their several districts. 4. To superintend the religious instruction of the young, and assist the pastor in ascertaining the qualifications of applicants for admission to sealing ordinances. 5. To superintend and promote the formation of meetings within their districts for prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and Christian fellowship among the members of the church.” The office of the deacon, as also stated in the language of the Church, is, “1. To give special regard to the whole secular affairs of the congregation. 2. To attend to the gathering of the people’s contributions to the general fund for the sustentation of the ministry, and to receive the donations which may be made for other ecclesiastical purposes. 3. To attend to the congregational poor; and, 4. To watch over the education of the children of the poor.”

Such are the ordinary office-bearers of the Church, and through them he carries on the affairs of his house, secular and sacred. They were appointed to this very end. They hold authority of Christ, and, in their proper province, and the due discharge of their appropriate duties, they, as officers of his, ought to be acknowledged, honoured, and obeyed. It is a law of his house—behold this is a law of the house—that ye obey in the Lord them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves—that ye esteem them very highly in love for their work sake, whose faith

follow considering the end of their vocation—the perfecting of the saints—the work of the ministry—the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Once more, in reference to yourselves. It is enacted and ordained that everything connected with the service of the sanctuary be most holy. You see how it is written—“This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy.” Your comings to, your goings from, your service here “most holy.” The day, the place, the pastor, yourselves, “most holy.” And holiness unto the Lord should be inscribed on everything and all. Aught of sin or impropriety let it never once be named or seen among you as becometh saints. It were a desecration of the sanctuary, a profanation of the service. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who stand within his holy temple? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity nor sworn deceitfully; he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.” “Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the most high God? He hath showed thee, oh man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” “This is the law of the house; behold, this is the law of the house.” And see, then, that, obedient to the law, ye act accordingly. See that, ere ever ye come here, ye put away from you the evil and abominable thing. Go, wash your hands in innocency, so shall ye encompass acceptably the altar of the Lord. Each Sabbath morn, in prayer, and penitence, and faith, repair ye to the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness; then, washed, and purified, and sanctified, present yourselves before the Lord without spot or evil—holy and unblameable in his sight. Ye people, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. “Behold, this is the law of the house.”

And now, having, agreeably to the instructions here delivered, shown to you the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof, it only remains for me, in the language of the text, to call upon you to measure the pattern. “Arise,” then, and take the measuring line, “the word.” Apply it “to the temple and the altar, and them that worship therein,” and see that it exactly and in all agrees.

The times demand it. We, too, have fallen upon evil days—days of deep declension from the faith and manners of our fathers. Where is the blessedness which once was spoken of when such glorious things were

said of Zion—when, for “the great pitch of reformation which she had attained, she was called Philadelphia and the Morning Star of the Reformation”—“when she had reached a height of purity and efficiency to which no church in Christendom ever attained”—nay, to use the words of one of her historians, “which were denied to the purest of the primitive churches.” Ah, where is the blessedness which once was spoken of when “the Lord was known in a remarkable manner in her assemblies and dwelling-places; and upon all the glory there was a defence—the doctrine being sound and lively—the worship pure and spiritual—the discipline powerful and impartial—the government beautiful as Tirzah, and comely as Jerusalem, for order and unity; and all accompanied with the rich breakings and influences of the Spirit of the Lord; so that, at that period, the Church of Scotland was spoken of among foreigners as one of the brightest candlesticks among the churches of Christ.” “Alas for the day!” Write on that fairest page of Scotland’s History, “Ichabod—the glory hath departed.”

A melancholy change has taken place—a vast departure from the good old ways in which our fathers walked. And meet it is that we take up the call to reformation. And mindful that the mighty engine in the hand of God has ever been, as proved in bye-past history, “the Word,” we would, as here instructed, show you the law of the house, and what it is the Lord requireth you to be and do, so that as ye measure yourselves by what ye ought to be, and might be, ye may be ashamed of your shortcomings and sins, and forgetting the things which are behind, reach forth unto those which are before, striving in all things and at all times to be perfect and complete in all the will of God. Go, then, and measure the pattern. Your Bible in your hands, apply the measuring line to your Church, your conscience, character, and creed. And see to it that they agree exactly and in every part. See to it, men and brethren, that your principles are Bible principles—your opinions Bible opinions—that out of Scripture you can plead the rule—and from Scripture show the warrant for every article and act of your religious observance and belief. Remember the hour is drawing on when you shall answer to the Lord—in judgment. By this word you shall be justified or by it condemned. Now the rule of life, it shall hereafter be the rule of judgment. And, as ye would not be judged, see that by the “Word,” without partiality and without hypocrisy, ye judge yourselves now. Ah, see that ye have ground and warrant in the Record of God for all that you believe or do, so that to any man and every man enquiring a reason for the faith that is in you, laying your hands upon the “Word,” and on the very page and passage, ye may be able to say and show, “Thus saith the Lord!” “It is written,” “it is written.” This is the law of the house. “Behold this is the law of the house.” AMEN.

SERMON C.

THE DREADFUL CONSEQUENCE OF BEING FOUND AT LAST WITHOUT THE
WEDDING-GARMENT.

BY THE REV. JAMES DRUMMOND, FORGANDENNY.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

BEFORE proceeding to illustrate these solemn and most instructive words, let us direct our attention, for a few moments, to the scope and import of the parable, of which they form an important part.

"The kingdom of heaven," then, spoken of in that parable, is the state of the visible church—the state of God's kingdom of mercy and grace, as it is exhibited in this fallen, sinful world. "The King" is God himself, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. "The King's son" is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the bridegroom, while the Church is his bride, or spouse. In the Song of Solomon, in the Psalms, and in many parts of the New Testament, he is so denominated. "The marriage-supper" represents the rich and plentiful provision which God, in his marvellous mercy and love, has made in the Gospel for the souls of lost and perishing sinners. Having sent his only-begotten and well-beloved Son into this apostate world to be the bridegroom of his church, he has made ample provision, and given gracious invitations in the Gospel, to encourage transgressors of every rank and degree to accept of him, and by faith to surrender themselves to him, that they may participate in all the benefits of his great salvation. This "marriage-supper" is an *abundant* feast, for it contains enough for all sinners—all needful spiritual blessings, both for time and for eternity—mercy for the pardon of all sin, grace for the renewal and sanctification of the soul, the assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, perseverance therein to the end, a sure title to the kingdom of heaven, and meetness for the everlasting enjoyment of its glory and blessedness. It is also a precious feast; for the blessings which it provides are inestimable—they

are all of incalculable worth, having been purchased with the infinitely precious blood of the bridegroom himself; 1 Peter i. 18-19. It is a feast also that is *free*—free to all, for all sinners throughout the world who enjoy the privilege of a preached Gospel are invited to come and partake of it. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” The servants whom “the King” sent forth first, were the apostles and the seventy disciples; these were commissioned to invite those who had been already bidden to this marriage-supper, namely, the Jews in the time of our Lord, who had previously been offered the provisions of this feast by the prophecies and calls of the Old Testament Scriptures, by John the Baptist, and even by the Bridegroom himself. These Jews, however, refused to comply. And so is it still with by far the greater part of those who are invited by the ministry of the Word to come to Jesus; they will not come to him; they virtually and practically say, “We will not have this man to save us, and to reign over us.” The servants whom “the King” next sent forth to invite persons to come to his marriage-supper, were the apostles, the evangelists, and other disciples, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles; these were despatched on their errand of mercy after Christ’s resurrection and ascension to heavenly glory. The Jews, however, who were thus again bidden, made light of the King’s invitation, and contemptuously went their ways, some to their farms, and others to their merchandize. Alas! so is it still with thousands and tens of thousands of the hearers of the word. Like the Jews of old, they prefer their different secular employments and interests, their farms, their merchandize, yea, their unprofitable and sinful amusements, to Christ, and the salvation of their immortal souls. Their incessant cry is not, “Lord, lift upon us the light of thy reconciled countenance;” but, “who will shew us any earthly good? What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” As we may suppose the servants to have remonstrated with the remnant of these despisers on the ingratitude and deep criminality of their conduct, they became so enraged and exasperated against their faithful reprovers, that they maltreated and even murdered them. Such, we find, was the actual conduct of the Jews towards the apostles and evangelists; and we have no doubt that many who are within the pale of the visible church would treat faithful ministers of the Gospel in a similar way—would scourge, and even slay them, were circumstances

such as to permit them to do it with impunity. "The King's being wroth, and sending forth his armies and destroying those murderers, and burning up their city," expresses God's awful indignation at the obstinate unbelief, and cruel outrages of the Jews, in opposing and murdering his servants, who came to bring the last dispensation of his mercy to them, and his stirring up the Romans at length to make war against them. In the unerring righteousness of his Providence, he sent the armies of that people—which were in truth *his* armies, inasmuch as he employed them as the instruments of his vengeance—Deut. xxviii. 49; Isaiah x. 5-7; and xiii. 2-5; Jeremiah, li. 25;—to destroy their nation, and to reduce Jerusalem to ashes. This issue had been foretold by Christ before his death, and the prediction was literally and awfully accomplished. But let it be well remembered, that as hearers of the Gospel have the same God still to deal with, so he will, in like manner, punish all the despisers of his well-beloved Son, and all the implacable enemies of his faithful servants. He will one day execute the most tremendous vengeance on them, and consume them with unquenchable fire. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Let these solemn and awful words of the Apostle Paul be seriously and prayerfully pondered by all who read them. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."—2 Thessalonians i. 7-10. "The King," however, notwithstanding what had happened, being still graciously resolved to find other guests who might partake of his royal banquet, sent out his servants to the highways to invite as many as they could find, both bad and good, to the marriage; and, in this way, his feast chamber was at length replenished with guests. This part of the parable represents to us, that when the Jews, by madly putting away Christ and the Gospel, judged themselves and were judged by God, as unworthy of eternal life, the apostles were commanded by their Divine Master to go to the highways, to turn into the way of the Gentiles, to preach the Gospel to *them*, and freely to invite *them* to a full participation in all the privileges of the Lord's redeemed people. In this mission they were far more successful; for the Lord Jesus will have a kingdom in this world, though multitudes of blind, infatuated sinners, like the Jews of old, reject the grace, and resist the power of that kingdom. Though Israel be not gathered, yet he shall be glorious; for the Father has given him for a light to the Gentile nations, that he may be his people's

salvation to the uttermost ends of the earth. Multitudes of idolatrous heathens, in all parts of the Roman world, gladly welcomed the Gospel message which the apostles brought to them; and flourishing churches were soon planted in Rome, in Corinth, in different cities of Galatia, in Ephesus, in Philippi, in Colosse, in Thessalonica, and in a vast number of other places.

The parable, thus far, represents the replenishing of the visible church with professing believers, or the actual state of the visible church; but that part of it which follows, and which, in humble dependence on the help and blessing of God, we are now to consider for a little, points out the vast difference that subsists between nominal and real believers. "And when the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now, observe in general, that the man here spoken of is the type or representative of a large and numerous class; his case is intended to exhibit the condition and character of those hypocrites—those false and hollow professors of religion who are in the church of Christ, but who are not of it—who have a name to live, but who are still dead, spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins—who have a form, and, it may be, an imposing show of godliness, but who have never experienced its heaven-creating, its sweetly constraining, and its all-purifying power—who, in short, whatever they may think of themselves, and others may think of them, are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. But, in order that we may bring out the real character, and condition, and danger of such persons, as they are here parabolically, but yet most truly and graphically depicted, let us carefully attend to the three following points:—

- I. The discovery.
- II. The trial; and
- III. The condemnation of this man.

I. In the *first* place, then, let us consider how this man was detected. "And when the king," it is said, "came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment." The king entered his feast-chamber to see the guests—that is, to salute, and give a hospitable and gracious welcome to such as had come duly attired in the robe which he had provided for them, as the manner in eastern countries then was, and also to mark and turn out those who had presumed to enter his

royal house in an unwarranted and unbefitting dress. And does not this incident, my brethren, most plainly teach us that the God of heaven takes special cognizance of all those who make a profession of his religion—who have a name and a place in his visible church? While he observes and knows full well all men everywhere, and with rigorous accuracy records in the book of his remembrance their various thoughts, and words, and actions, he has his eye specially and continually fixed upon that class of them who profess to love and serve him. Ezekiel seems not to have been aware of the vast number of God's professing people in his day who were in the habit of coming to him, as the true Israel did, and of sitting before him as they did, pretending to hear his words, and to be greatly delighted with the doctrines which he preached, but who yet slighted all his admonitions, with their mouth showing much love, while their hearts still went after their covetousness. The Lord, however, apprised him of the fact, thereby showing that his eye is particularly and constantly directed towards this class of men. Ezekiel xxxiii. 30-32, and Isaiah xxix. 13-16. And what an eye, my brethren, is *his* eye!—not like the eye of a short-sighted fellow-creature, not like the eye of a prophet or a minister, but an all-seeing and ever-watchful eye—an eye that sees by night as well as by day—an eye that penetrates through the thickest darkness—an eye that looks down into the lowest depths of our souls, and most clearly discerns every thought, and feeling, and motive, and purpose that may be in our hearts; yea, an eye that searches our hearts, and tries the very reins of our souls. In the Book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus is represented as walking continually among the golden candlesticks—that is, among the churches; and, therefore, it is added, that he knows the character and the works of all his professing people. O surely, my brethren, this solemn consideration may well serve to warn us all against hypocrisy, and to remind us of the awful day, fast approaching, when all the various cloaks and disguises which we may now assume shall be stripped off, and when every man, every religious professor, every communicant, shall be made to stand forth in his real colours.

But observe, this man was not discovered to be destitute of a wedding-garment, until the king himself came in to see the guests; and so it is the prerogative of Jehovah himself to perceive and know those who are sound at heart in their religious profession, and those who are otherwise. Ministers of the Gospel, however faithful and watchful, may be, and actually are deceived in men, in a thousand different ways; but He whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who knoweth what is in man, can never be imposed upon in any way. The Day of Judgment will be the grand, detecting, unveiling day; and

when that solemn and decisive day arrives, all the guests, all the members of the visible church, good and bad, all professing Christians, shall be presented to the King, and then he will separate for ever between the precious and the vile, between the wheat and the chaff, between the sheep and the goats; then the King will in very deed come in to see the guests; then the secrets of all hearts and of all characters shall be laid open to the astonished gaze of an assembled world; and then certainly we shall be able to discern infallibly between the righteous and the wicked, which it is impossible for us to do now.

No sooner, however, had the king entered the guest chamber than his eye fixed itself upon this hypocrite. "He saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment." Though this man was the only individual in the company who was in this unhappy predicament, he was instantly detected. And so there is no hope, not the least prospect of our being concealed in a crowd from the arrests of Divine justice. Though the whole world shall be stationed around the judgment-seat of Christ—though countless myriads of men shall be there, even all the natural descendants of Adam from the beginning to the end of time—yet not a single sinner shall be able to screen himself among the vast assemblage from the glance of Omniscience. But wherein lay the fault of this man? It lay in this single circumstance, that he had not on a wedding-garment—he was not arrayed as befitted a nuptial solemnity. And how many, alas! in our day are but too like him, coming to the Gospel-feast and intruding into the church of Christ without the wedding-garment! But what are we to understand by this wedding-garment of which he was destitute? The whole Scriptures declare and demonstrate, that it is just the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, imputed by God, and received by faith. This is the only ground of our justification and acceptance before an infinitely holy and just God. We have not, and we never can have, any righteousness or merit of our own that will avail for that end. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." How clearly and emphatically does the Word of God everywhere testify as to the absolute necessity of our being clothed with Christ's divine and spotless righteousness, in order to our salvation, and in order to our being the true and acceptable members of his Church! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." It was in this robe that all the Old Testament saints were attired, for the Lord Jesus alone was their righteousness and their strength, and this was their song—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,

my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Neither had the New Testament saints any other, as the apostle Paul declares with respect to himself and all genuine believers in his time. "What things soever were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; that I may win him, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith." This is, indeed, the fine linen, clean and white, which constitutes the righteousness of saints, and without which we are still in a state of condemnation, and lying under the wrath and curse of God. It is not said of this man, you will observe, that he had no clothing upon him at all ; but the simple fact asserted regarding him is, that he had not *on* the wedding-garment. And so those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus Christ by faith—who lay hold on his righteousness and finished work—who rely exclusively on his glorious atoning sacrifice for restoration to the favour of God, and admission into heaven at last—to whom Christ crucified for the sins of his people is all their salvation and all their desire, the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely—they only have on the wedding garment which God has provided. Whatever other righteousness we may have, or think we have, if we have not the righteousness of Immanuel above all and covering all, the Lord will abhor and disown us for our filthiness.

II. Let us now, in the *second* place, consider the trial of this man. And here let us notice, how he was charged. "Friend," said the king to him, "how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment ?" This could not fail to be a most startling and thrilling question to one who had ventured, contrary to all rule and custom, to thrust himself into such an honourable position. "Friend," as if the king had said to him, "I know thee well ; thou needest not try to conceal thyself ; it is in vain that thou thinkest to hide thy real character from my view ; I perceive what it is ; thou art but a hollow and pretended friend, but a friend in profession ; yea, thou art an enemy in disguise, for thou hast no real friendship nor affection to me in thine heart." Ah ! my brethren, to how many Gospel professors in our time, yea, to how many communicants, might not God justly speak in this alarming manner ! How many are there within the bosom of the visible church of Christ who say they love him, and yet their hearts are far from him, and filled

with the very things, the very idols and sins, which he abhors! "Friend, how camest *thou* in hither?" The king did not proceed to upbraid his servants for allowing this man to enter his guest-chamber, for the wedding-garment is an inward and imperceptible thing; and ministers of the Gospel, in admitting persons to communion with the visible church of Christ, must, in general, proceed according to what falls within the range of their own observation and knowledge; but he reprimanded the man himself for his presumption and audacity in intruding into the marriage-supper, when he could not but be well aware, that his habit was such as to render him altogether unwelcome. But, in point of fact, my brethren, the time is fast approaching, when such a scene as this will be enacted. The Day of Judgment is drawing nigh, when hypocrites of every class will be summoned to account for all their presumptuous intrusion into gospel ordinances, and for all their wicked usurpation of gospel privileges. Misspent time, unimproved mercies, and providential visitations, a neglected Bible, unblest sermons, despised Sabbaths, profaned and abused sacraments, these must and shall all yet be reckoned for, and judgment shall be passed by a righteous God upon every one who has received his grace in vain. When the final day arrives, he will assuredly inquire, "How camest thou to sit down at my holy table at such a time, when thou knewest well that thy heart was wholly unhumbled and unsanctified? How didst thou venture to seat thyself before my ministering servants as my people sit, when thy heart still swarmed and swelled with its lusts, when the world and its pursuits and profits engrossed thy thoughts and affections? How camest thou in hither? Surely it could not be by the door, by the way of entrance which I prepared—it could not be by Christ, but in some other way, as a thief and a robber." O surely, my brethren, it becomes all professing believers, and especially all who are in communion with the visible church of Christ, frequently and seriously to ask themselves these all-important questions—"How came I in hither? Was it by the door? Have I on the wedding-garment of Jesus' righteousness? Am I a true believer after all? Am I a Christian indeed? Have I actually undergone that great spiritual change, without which I am assured by the unerring word of inspiration I can neither hope to see God in his ordinances here, nor expect to be prepared for the enjoyment of his glorious presence in his kingdom above?" But, let us notice also how this man was proved guilty. "He was speechless," it is said; he could not utter a single word in his own vindication. In the presence of the King, he stood mute and dumb, and downcast, being convicted and condemned in his own conscience. And so, my brethren, will it certainly be at last with all who live in the Church of

Christ, and yet live and die without a saving interest in Christ, they will be speechless; they will not have one word to say for themselves—in the judgment of the great day, they will be without excuse. Should they venture to plead, as our lord assures us many will do, “We have eaten and drunken in thy presence;” such a plea will only be tantamount to a confession of their guilt, for the crime that is laid to their charge is, that they presume to thrust themselves into Christ’s presence, and to seat themselves at his holy table, before they are effectually called. The poor blind idolatrous heathen in other lands, unblest with the light of the glorious Gospel, who never heard a word of this wedding-feast, will have far more to say for themselves than such persons; their sin will be more excusable, and their condemnation more tolerable, than will be *theirs* who come to the wedding-feast without the wedding-garment, and who will therefore be held as having sinned at once against the clearest light, and the most marvellous love.

III. Let us now, in the *third* place, attend for a moment to the sentence and portion of this man. This is a most solemn and awful part of the subject, and one which deserves to be seriously pondered by us all, “Then said the King to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Like a condemned malefactor, he is ordered to be forthwith manacled and shackled. Even in this world there is a binding authorized and appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ, as the glorious King and Head of his Church—a binding by his ministering servants, whose suspension of persons, who walk disorderly to the offence and scandal of religion, is so called. This is a binding up of such transgressors, and a prohibiting of them from partaking of the sealing ordinances of the visible church, and also a binding of them over to the righteous judgments of God. (Matt. xviii. 15-20.) At the Day of Judgment, however, hypocrites will be bound after another sort; then the holy angels, the servants of the Lord Jesus, and the willing executioners of his sentence, shall bind up these tares in bundles, and shall cast them into the fire to be burned; then they shall be bound hand and foot by an irrevocable sentence—a sentence which they shall be able neither to resist nor elude.

He is ordered also to be removed immediately from the marriage feast. “Take him away,” said the King—“Away” from the King, of whom it is said, that “in his presence is fulness of joy, and that at his right hand are pleasures for evermore;”—“away” from the King’s Son, who has himself said, “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which

thou hast given me ;"—"Away" from the kingdom, of which it is said, that it is "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith into salvation ;"—"Away" from the company of the redeemed, of whom it is said, that "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them nor any heat ; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Truly, such a sentence is equivalent to that which our Lord declares he will at last pronounce upon all hypocrites and ungodly men, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." We may easily conceive that the misery of this unhappy man, under such a sentence, must have been awfully enhanced by the consideration, that he had beheld with his own eyes the rich and splendid entertainment which the King had prepared for his guests, but that he was not permitted to partake of it. He went through the guest chamber, with the feast full in his view, to outer darkness. And how do hypocrites go to hell ? Ah ! that we would consider it. Not as heathens—not as those who are beyond the pale of the visible church, go to it ; but through the very midst of the Church—through her most solemn ordinances, over their Bible and a preached gospel—past a gracious God—past a bleeding and beseeching Saviour—and past all his faithful servants and people, who would fain allure them into the way of righteousness and peace. O ye hypocrites, ye presumptuous intruders into the gospel feast, this is the way in which ye are marching to hell. It will not be from the darkness of heathenism, but from the light and the privileges, and the ample provisions of the Church of Christ, that ye shall be taken thither. Will ye not consider this ere it be too late, and make your escape from that aggravated woe which will assuredly be the consequence of your present character and state ?

He is ordered also to be thrown into some dismal dungeon. "Take him away, said the King, and cast him into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Laying this man's case aside, let us carefully notice here, that this is the language in which our blessed Lord frequently describes the unending wretchedness and torments of hell, the portion of all hypocrites and unbelievers. See Matthew viii. 12, and xiii. 42-50, and xxiv. 51, and xxv. 30. Hell is *outer* darkness, lying far beyond the celestial world, which is a land of unclouded light and glory ; yea, it is utter, absolute darkness, darkness like that of Egypt, which might be felt, "the blackness of darkness for ever." There is "weeping" indeed—not a transient burst, not a momentary gush of tears, which

often imparts present relief—but constant, interminable weeping—eternal lamentation, which, of course, is eternal anguish. The incessant remembrance of a day of grace misimproved, of offered mercy rejected, of solemn warnings unheeded, of a precious Saviour slighted, of heaven disregarded—that is the fountain which will supply this ceaseless flow of weeping and howling. There, too, is “gnashing of teeth,”—indeed, an expression which plainly intimates that, in addition to their exhaustless sorrow, their bitter perpetual weeping, the miserable inmates of hell will be filled with the utmost rage and indignation, even against God himself. They shall be “like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury and rebukes of the Lord.” “It shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, and shall despair of relief, they shall fret themselves, and curse their King and their God.” Yes, my brethren, from various passages in the book of Revelation, we are taught to believe that hell is filled with blasphemers against God, determined and horrid blasphemers, in proportion to the degree and intensity of its torments; and surely they are as ignorant of the history of human nature, as of the Bible and of their own hearts, who do not know, that the more wicked men suffer, and the more clearly they perceive the hand of the Almighty in their sufferings, the more furiously and madly do they often rage against him. O let us all, then, now earnestly seek faith and repentance from Christ, and the sanctifying grace of his Holy Spirit—let us strive and wrestle to get these, otherwise we shall hereafter have the anguish and horror of an unhumbled, impenitent, and despairing heart, burning with diabolical enmity against God, as well as tortured by the tremendous fire of his indignation, and thus augmenting our guilt and our misery to all eternity.

In conclusion, let all unbelieving and unconverted sinners among us hear and fear. Let us be persuaded to take warning in time. Let us flee instantly to the city of refuge which now stands open to receive and shelter us within its walls. Jesus is that city. In him alone can we find safety and peace. He is the way, and the truth, and the life; no sinful child of Adam can come to the Father but by him; but all who come through faith in his name, however guilty and vile they may now be, shall certainly find mercy, and a sure title to an eternal inheritance. They shall not only be delivered from their sins, with all their fearful consequences, but they shall also be exalted to the favour and image of God, yea, made heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Except ye be converted, ye shall all likewise perish.” Let us not delude ourselves with the vain fancy that we are beyond the reach of danger, and are in no risk of being cast into outer darkness, because we may happen to be in mem-

bership with the visible Church of Christ; for, in the first place, it is our sin and our crime that we are within her pale, and participate in her peculiar privileges, if we entered under a mask, and are still only base dissemblers. And then, in the next place, let us remember that thousands, yea, tens of thousands, have passed from the bosom of the visible church to the regions of eternal despair. There are multitudes, doubtless, now in the bottomless pit, weeping and gnashing their teeth in hopeless misery, who were once communicants on earth. How many of ancient Israel, from time to time, perished in their sins, although they had been circumcised in their infancy, and had often joined with the Lord's true people in the celebration of the holy ordinance of the pass-over! In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, too, under the New Testament, we clearly perceive that a high profession of religion and communion with the genuine followers of the Lamb will, of themselves, save none from the overwhelming judgments of God. The same lesson is emphatically taught us by the instances of Judas Iscariot and Simon Magus, and many others. No, my brethren, let us be assured, on the testimony of Him who cannot lie, that nothing will avail for our salvation, in time and through eternity, but faith in the glorious righteousness of Immanuel, and an actual participation in his renewing and sanctifying grace. We must be washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, if ever we are to be found among the ransomed of the Lord. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "But as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

SERMON CI.

SELF-EVIDENCING POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

BY THE REV. GEORGE LEWIS, DUNDEE.

"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."—JOHN ix. 25.

OUR Saviour had restored sight to a man born blind, whom he found begging by the wayside. The fame of so remarkable a miracle reached the ears of the Jewish sanhedrim. Alarmed at the growing reputation of Jesus, and afraid of the impression which this new miracle might make on the minds of the people, the rulers of the sanhedrim call the object of it into their presence, not with a design honestly to search into its truth and reality, and to give honour to whom honour is due, but with the dishonest purpose of finding out some means of destroying its credit with the people, and depriving Jesus of the reputation of so remarkable a cure. They first attempt to fix on the whole transaction the imputation of fraud, alleging that the man never had been blind. Defeated, in this attempt, by the unanimous testimony of the neighbours and of the man's own parents, they shift their ground; and, under the pretence of giving to God the glory of a cure they could no longer deny, they insinuate that they knew Jesus to be a sinner, because he healed on the Sabbath-day, and that God never would employ a sinner in performing such a miracle.

This mode of honouring God by dishonouring his benefactor the poor man does not comprehend. In whatever reverence he may have been brought up for the doctors of the sanhedrim, he knew better than any one of them that he had once been blind, and who it was that put clay upon his eyes, and commanded him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. They might as well have attempted to reason the man out of the belief in his own existence as try to persuade him, that he owed nothing to Jesus. Impatient, therefore, of these attempts to dispute what to him was indisputable, and with a heart filled with gratitude for the blessed light of heaven which he now enjoyed, he puts aside all these cavils with the plain blunt reply in our text, "Whether he be a sinner

or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Now, as this poor man had evidence in himself that a miracle had been wrought upon him, which the cavils and objections of all the Jewish doctors could not shake, so it is with every believer. He has an evidence in himself of the truth of the Gospel, which no cavils and no objections ought to shake. The nature of this evidence admits of a very simple illustration.

Suppose any of us fell into bad health, and, after exhausting the usual remedies prescribed for our ailment, we found them unavailing either to remove the disease or to check its progress. If, in this emergency, some friend came to us and suggested a new remedy—one which he himself had tried in a similar case, with entire success—no doubt, in first making use of this new remedy, we should do so solely from confidence in the friend who recommended it; but the slightest personal experience of its benefits would do more to induce us to continue its use than the highest possible recommendation from any other man, whatever might be our respect for his judgment. The feeling of returning health, of renewed vigour, of increased and increasing appetite, would be the most pleasing and powerful of all persuasions to persevere in the application; and, if it so happened that when, from neglect or other cause, we intermitted the use, the immediate consequence was a relapse into our old complaint; but that, still as we returned to the remedy, it exhibited the same healing virtues; we should then think, and think justly, that this was the very remedy for our disease; and did any one who had never known our complaint, or never tried our remedy, venture to express his doubts—insinuate the possibility of self-deceit—assure us that he knew nothing in the medicine to effect so remarkable a cure, we should never think of giving up its use for any such doubts and objections, but would at once overrule them by giving our own happy experience to the contrary, and reply in the spirit, if not in the very language, of the poor man in our text—"Whether your objections be true or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was in hopeless ill health until I used this medicine, now I am restored."

The most cautious man alive would, in a matter in which his life or health were concerned, have no manner of hesitation in preferring a little personal experience of the virtue of any bodily remedy, to all the speculative objections of men who had never known his disease, nor proved the efficacy of his cure.

Now, it is precisely so with the Gospel as a remedy for our spiritual diseases. Various may have been the causes which first recommended

the Gospel to our attention. It may have been the wise care of faithful and affectionate parents, who had themselves felt its truth—its peace and joy. It may have been some Christian friend who first drew our attention to its blessed truths; or it may have been the pressure of afflictions which, in maturer years, sought a consolation the world could not give. Any one or all of these may have been the means employed by God for recommending the Gospel first to our attention; but these did nothing more than introduce us to that which, on experience, has proved its own best recommendation. Having the recommendation of personal experience, the believer needs no other. A personal feeling of the truth and power of religion in the heart is worth all other evidences; and without this all the evidences collected and displayed in the volumes of the learned are nought towards our personal Christianity: furnished with this highest and best evidence, all other becomes no better than a letter of recommendation, after having made the acquaintance and friendship of the bearer. Knowing what we believe, feeling it, enjoying it, were all other evidences destroyed, there is in the records of a believer's own heart—a self-evidence, on the strength of which he may put aside all objections and all cavils, and, like the poor blind man restored to sight by the Saviour of the world, he may reply—Whether your objections be true or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind to the truth of these things even as you are, now I see them, and have personal experience of their truth.

Seeing the Gospel carries its own evidence along with it into the heart of every truly converted man, let us consider one of the doctrines of our holy faith in this light of experience. For this purpose, let us select that doctrine of our faith which stands, perhaps of all others, most prominently in the face of the Word of God, and which forms the foundation of all the rest—namely, the Bible account of human depravity.

The Bible is, indeed, but a history from beginning to end of man's alienation from his Maker, and God's goodness in visiting him in his lost estate. But not only do the Scriptures present historically man's sin and depravity, but in the clearest and strongest words again and again declare what in God's view is the present state of human nature. No sooner had the flood ceased from off the earth, and one entire generation of mankind been swept away for its wickedness, than the Creator is heard to declare, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." One of God's prophets declares, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" The heart of man is described as a lodge of vain thoughts. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "The

hearts of the sons of men," says another inspired writer, "are full of evil, and madness is in their heart whilst they live." Whether we are in the condition described in these words, must be a matter of experience. If the Bible truly describes human nature, experience will testify to its truth; and if false, no reverence for Scripture acquired from the early instruction of revered parents, or other guides of our youth, will make us receive through life what experience is found to contradict. But by *whose* experience are these representations to be tried? Is it by the experience of the man who never thought seriously on the state of his own heart and life before God? or is it by the experience of the man who is in earnest about the value of his soul, and who has set himself sincerely to strive and to struggle with the power of indwelling sin? Were I to say of the atmosphere of this house of prayer that it is filled with dust, to *whose* experience would I submit the truth of this declaration? Not to yours, brethren, for you would instantly reply that you saw no dust in its atmosphere. Yet, let but a single ray of light of more than usual brightness shine in, and myriads of particles of dust will be seen floating in its radiance, shewing the whole surrounding atmosphere to be filled with the same particles, requiring only a brighter light to render them visible to every eye.

The light of natural conscience will at times disquiet the bosom of any man, and give him a glimpse of his sins, but just such a glimpse as the blind man had when he saw trees like men walking. Until heaven's own light shine into the soul, we can have no just view of our sins. We cannot see ourselves as God sees us, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin"—by the law brought into the heart by God's own spirit, and made to shine upon our character and ways. "I was *alive* without the law once," says the Apostle, that is, "I was alive in my own esteem, for I saw myself only in the light of the world's opinions and maxims." He thought himself a righteous person—strict amongst the strict—a Pharisee amongst the Pharisees—in all the commandments and ordinances of the law blameless. "But when the *law came*"—that is, when God's spiritual law shone upon his soul, that law which reaches even to the thoughts and intents of the heart—"then *sin revived and I died*"—I discerned myself to be dead in trespasses and sins, and in the exceeding breadth of God's law I learned the exceeding greatness of my own departures from its purity. Then it was the Apostle knew himself, and then it is that the believer knows himself, sees what he saw not, and feels what he felt not, before. And let any man doubt or deny the truth of the Scripture representation of our spiritual condition; personal experience replies in the spirit of the poor man restored to sight, "Once I was blind to these things even as you are, but now I see myself to be indeed poor, and blind, and naked; and

like the poor bird with the arrow in its side, I can find no rest but at the foot of the cross, where is to be found not only forgiveness, but the promise of a new heart and of a right spirit.

But it is not only when we are first awakened by convictions of sin, that we obtain the largest experience of the truth of the Scriptural account of the state of our heart. Our experience has then only begun. Having entered on the conflict, we learn the power, the treachery, the tenacity of the enemy, as we prosecute the conflict. Though we have now far juster views of God's law and of our own weakness, yet we do not at once apprehend practically all the breadth of that law, nor at once use the candle of the Lord to survey all parts of our temper and character. Successive trials bring out the strength of sin, show practically and in detail, and by sad experience, what before we only knew vaguely and generally. It is when we set about in good earnest doing the will of God, and bringing our thoughts and desires, our views and feelings, into subjection to the divine law, that we gradually perceive and feel the truth of all that is said in the Bible of the inveteracy and malignity of our spiritual disorder. Let some temptation assail us to our besetting sin, we call to mind the cross of the Redeemer, and all he did and endured for us. For a moment our hearts are moved to tenderness and love, and the tempter gives way; but like those who came to take Jesus, and who on first seeing him, went backward and fell to the ground, yet straightway arose again and laid hands on him; so the tempter arises again and lays hands on us. We seek to break his power by remembering that we are of God's peculiar people; called to be zealous of good works, and that on the heart and life of a Christian should be inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord." Still the tempter presses hard on us. We strive to present to our minds the just judgment of God against all unrighteousness. Still we rush forward, though it be on the thick bosses of the buckler of the Almighty. We speak to our hearts of the folly and madness of sin; but the feelings of shame and self-reproach have lost all power to withstand the tempter. We strive to fly from it. It follows us as on the wings of the wind. We strive to direct our minds to other subjects. None but the forbidden thought will come or will stay with us. Neither the hopes of heaven nor the fears of hell deter the soul. Neither the mercies of God nor the love of Christ restrain us. We dislike it, yet we indulge it. We abhor it, yet we cleave to it. We loathe it, yet it dwells with us. We have not courage to cast out the evil thing, and if God, by his grace, prevent not, we become its slave. Did you never, brethren, experience such a struggle in your breast? The apostle Paul did, when he had made greater progress in subduing sin than any of us.

He cries out for deliverance from it as from an irreconcilable enemy. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I know not, for the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do;" and such is the experience of every Christian. Both when victorious and when vanquished he learns the strength of his adversary by the resistance he offers to all the persuasions of the Gospel; and to all the cavils of men who know not the love of God; neither consider the state of their own hearts, he may answer in the spirit of the blind man restored to sight, "Be your cavils against the doctrine of human depravity true or not, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind to the state of my own heart and life, now I see the Scriptures to describe me truly, and that my heart is indeed deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

We cannot touch on all the evidences which the increasing experience of the believer affords him of the truth of the Bible doctrine of human depravity. Two more only we shall select, and these are, the inconsistency and inconsistency even of Christians.

How strangely inconstant and inconsistent even good men are! At one time very reasonable, at another most unreasonable. Sometimes very wise in their affairs, then very foolish—sometimes very open, then very reserved—very gentle, and very revengful—hot and cold—weak and stubborn by turns. The mood of our minds changes continually, and we cannot tell what is the cause, or if we could, it were probably something of the most trivial nature, which we should be ashamed to name, which our pride, or vanity, or selfishness has magnified into inordinate importance. Sometimes our affections are well-disposed towards God and man, stirred with elevated desires and affections, promising well for the advancement of God's glory, our own happiness, and that of others. But ere long the mood of our mind is changed into impatience and discontent—into murmuring and repining—into unkind and uncharitable thoughts; and the morning that looked so fair is overcast with clouds and darkness. Whence this sudden change? Whence this strange inconsistency even in the Christian? That which pleases in the morning is offensive ere night arrives, and the soul that yesterday possessed itself in patience, amidst much to trouble and afflict, is to-day full of disquietude. Whence but to that great and inveterate disorder which has unsettled our minds, destroyed their balance, filled us with strange contradictions, and made us as inconstant as the winds? The spirit of man, even in the best estate of grace, is never rightly adjusted, grace and nature are ever struggling together like Jacob and Esau, not in the first birth only, but throughout life, because Christ is never so seated in our hearts but there are lords many and gods many to dispute the pos-

session. The Christian having daily experience of these things, and daily lamenting over them, cannot but exclaim, that God is of a truth in that book which so truly estimates the human heart, and declares it to be deceitful and inconstant.

One more experimental proof of the self-evidencing power of the Gospel, and we close the argument. Hardly any of us are ever made better by God's temporal goodness towards us. When He wants, therefore, to make us better and wiser, more spiritually-minded, less worldly and carnal in our views and feelings, his way is not to send more temporal prosperity, more robust health, or to cast a fence about our families and friends, that no suffering or sorrow may enter in to cloud their joy. Knowing what is in man, when he would do good to our hearts, he takes another way. He robs us of a friend, of health, of fortune. He sends us one of his chastisements—those mercies of our heavenly Father in disguise. It is true the Apostle tells us that “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” Yes! this were the natural tendency of kindness in hearts rightly constituted. The increasing goodness of God, whether temporal or spiritual, should produce increasing gratitude, love, and obedience in his creatures. The language of the grateful soul should be, “Thou hast crowned me with thy loving kindness and tender mercies, from this day will I and my house serve the Lord, for he is the lifter up of my head, and the length of my days, and hath set my feet in a sure place.” But is this the language of the children of prosperity?—of health and youthful vigour—of those sitting wholly at their ease and quiet? Did you ever hear of a man suddenly come into possession of a large fortune, subdued thereby to repentance and contrition, brought to his knees to praise the Lord for his goodness, and under the influence of worldly prosperity becoming an humble disciple of Jesus. Or have you often known even Christians brought nearer to God by a sudden increase of worldly prosperity, filled with fears lest their temporal prosperity should bring leanness into their souls.

There are certain occasions in human life when the pastor is sent for to visit our families. What are these occasions? Is it when our families have received some accession of fortune—when the hearts of its members are made to dance for joy—when they fear no change, and this world seems as if it were made for them and theirs? Is it then we send for the minister of the Gospel, that he may sanctify our joy, and raise our souls to Him who has led us in the green pastures and by the still waters, who has anointed our head with oil, and made our cup run over. Is it then, brethren, that we send that he may hallow our joy, and mingle pious trembling with our mirth? It would be so were our affections in the right place towards God and eternal things

realized as they ought. But need I say, it is not so ? You may even think it strange that I should once mention such a thing as sending for the minister of religion in the day of prosperity. But this very strangeness illustrates that perversity of heart of which I speak. Yet it is not strange if viewed only in the light of God's word and of eternity ; for the goodness of God is intended to lead us to repentance, to increased gratitude, love, and obedience ; yet the whole tendency of our heart is to forget him altogether in the sunshine of life, and to remember him only in the storm—to refuse him as our counsellor in prosperity, and to seek him only in the day of darkness and sorrow—when brought down, from affluence and comfort, to dependence and poverty—when the heart is bleeding for the loss of much-loved friends—when made to feel our own weakness and littleness, and taught by the hand of disease and death what shadows we are and what shadows we pursue. In the parable of the wedding-supper, who were the individuals who began to make excuse ? Was it not the man who had purchased a piece of land or bought five yoke of oxen, or lived joyful with the wife of his youth ? And who were they who accepted the invitation ? The poverty-stricken, the halt, the maimed, and the blind. This, brethren, is the account given of us by Him who knows what is in man ; and is it not exactly true to your own experience, believers, of yourselves ? Was it not when the rod of God was upon your lot that your heart most inclined to him—that you felt most humble and submissive, most like to a child of God—when you lay upon a bed of suffering, or in apprehension drew near to the valley and shadow of death—when days of pain and wearisome nights were appointed you—when confined to your solitary sick chamber, or when watching by the sick-bed of one you loved ? Then you desired to know more of God, and to hold closer communion with him ; and if he dispersed the clouds that hung over your lot, did you not vow to walk more closely with him, and to give him a more devoted life ? But, as if to try you, now he has raised you up, some from a sick-bed, others from poverty to affluence, and your earthly cup is again replenished, are you not forgetful of the vow you made in pain and sorrow, and do you not feel your heart relapsing into a worldly, careless, ungodly frame of spirit ? Who, brethren, knowing these things to be so true to nature, even to renewed nature, does not see the admirable fidelity of the Scripture account of man ?—that to turn our hearts from our folly is like turning the way of the wild ass, who, when turned, will yet ever be turning back again ; that our hearts are set to do evil from our youth, and is not ready to do homage to the Scripture account of human nature, and to silence all the cavils and objections of men ignorant of themselves and ignorant of God's spiritual law by the plain

blunt reply of the poor man in our text—"Whether your objections be true or no, I know not : one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind to my exceeding sinfulness and ingratitude, now I see it by the light of daily experience."

Such, brethren, is the personal experience which every true believer has of the truth and reality of the Scripture account of our natural depravity. We have said enough to show that it is of no consequence who or what first brought us to read our Bibles, to pray, and to hear the word of God ;—be it parental authority, the custom of our country, a favourite pastor or teacher, or the pressure of worldly troubles that sought relief ; so that, having read our Bibles, having waited on instruction, having offered the prayer of faith, we have begun to experience Bible truths in their inward self-evidencing power—describing truly our very waywardness, caprices, folly, and sinfulness—giving the most humiliating view of our own condition, and yet inspiring the only sure hope of peace, and rest, and eternal salvation. The woman of Samaria first brought her countrymen to see Jesus by her report—"Come and see a man that told me all things that ever I did." But as the people of Samaria afterwards said to their guide, so we may say, if we have got this experimental evidence in our hearts, to the guides of our youth—"Now, we believe not because of your saying ; for we have seen him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."

Behold the Lamb of God ! said the Baptist to his disciples, as Christ passed by. One of the two that heard John speak was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, and he followed Jesus. But when he found Jesus for himself, he brought to him also his brother Simon. Yet it was not the Baptist's preaching, nor Andrew's information, that made Simon believe ; it was because he came and saw for himself that this was indeed the Son of God, the King of Israel.

The Scriptures are frequently termed light ; and what matters it that we come to look at this light, on the report of others, if on coming we have seen it to be light indeed. The heavenly vision which arrested Saul on his way to Damascus with its ineffable brightness did not strike with more irresistible splendour on the senses of the Apostle than the light of the Gospel, after receiving the instructions of Ananias, shone on his heart. The one was the evidence of external miracles to the eye of sense, the other was the manifestation of truth to the conscience of the Apostle. The one was only preparatory to the other. To gain the attention of Felix and Agrippa, men of the world, he spoke of the heavenly vision ; but to the converts at Corinth he spoke of Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wis-

dom of God. This is an evidence which in the believing soul grows with its spiritual growth, and strengthens with its spiritual strength. This was the experimental evidence which prompted the Apostle Paul to exclaim under an ever-deepening sense of indwelling sin, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and yet, in the view of his approaching sufferings and death, to say to his favourite disciple, "I have finished my course, I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith; and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory." Here is perfect assurance both of faith and of hope, arising both from personal evidence, of which no heart but his own and God could be the judge; and if we relax not in our Christian course, but press on year by year to higher attainments, each new year will increase both the assurance of faith and of hope; and the objections of men who understand not the Gospel, and still less their own hearts, will pass by us like the idle wind, or be put aside by the plain but unanswerable reply of the poor man in our text—"Whether your objections be true or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

SERMON CII.

THE UNITY OF CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. ALEX. ANDERSON, OLD ABERDEEN.

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."—HEBREWS II. 11.

It will be seen by a reference to the context that by "him that sanctifieth" we are to understand the Son of God. The Apostle having, in the previous chapter, asserted his proper and eternal divine Sonship, is now engaged in dealing with his manhood. He is removing the stumbling-block which his temporary humiliation as the Son of man presented to the reception of the doctrine of his real divinity. He is showing that, instead of forming any just cause of prejudice against Christ's divine dignity, the manifestation of the Son of God as a suffering man was an essential part of the scheme of salvation—a provision infinitely worthy of God, and infinitely adapted to the necessities of his people.

Our text presents one great step in this high argument, asserting the reason why, under the government of a just and holy God—even the Son of God, as the Saviour of sinners, must needs be subjected to suffering. "It became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."

Mark in our text, 1st, *a description of the work which Christ has come to accomplish for his people.* He is described as "He that sanctifieth," and his people as "they who are sanctified." To "sanctify" in this epistle, and indeed more generally in the Word of God, bears a sense considerably different from that which is attached to it in our Shorter Catechism, and in the conventional language of theology. (See Hebrews ix. 13, 14, and xiii. 12.) Thus, in John xvii. 19, Jesus says, "For their sakes, I sanctify myself." He was capable of no such sanctification as implies moral change. For, ere yet he had assumed our flesh, the angel testified of him to the virgin, "Therefore, also, *that holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of the Highest." The ex-

pression is to be interpreted with reference to the sanctification of the high priest under the law. The blood of the ram of consecration was appointed to be applied to the person of Aaron and his sons; and thus they were "sanctified"—that is, they were *fitted for approaching God with acceptance* in his most holy place. Thus Jesus sanctifies both himself and his people with his own blood, expiating and purging away, by this means, the sins of his people, and fitting them, and himself as their surety, for coming with acceptance into the presence of the holy God. This is the great end of the Saviour's mighty undertaking, to bring his people near to God. To a creature with a moral nature like man, distance from God is misery—it is death. We were afar off; Jesus came to bless and save us, simply by "making us nigh." Thus he is in our text most comprehensively, as well as appropriately, described as "He that sanctifieth." We say, most comprehensively; for this is the sum of all that he accomplishes as the Saviour of his people, to bring them back again to near fellowship with God;—most appropriately, for the word as here used carries us back to the shedding of blood needful for sanctification under the law, and at once suggests the necessity of the fact which the apostle is expounding, that Jesus, in sanctifying himself and his people, should in common with them both suffer and die.

Observe, *2dly*, in our text, *the declaration of the reason why the Son of God, in sanctifying his people, must himself of necessity be a sufferer.* The ordinance of consecration for the priesthood under the law, we have noticed, suggests this necessity; yet the question remains, whence the necessity of the shedding of blood—whether in the typical ordinance or in the great antitype? Our text answers this question—"He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." Here is the essence of the divine scheme for sinners' redemption. Here is the true "philosophy of the plan of salvation," the key by which its mysteries are opened, by which we gain a near and complete and satisfying view of its glorious and harmonious arrangements." "He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." What is the precise idea to which so much importance is to be attached conveyed by these words, they "are all of one?" Is it simply intended to assert that they are of one nature? This would by no means suit the place which our text occupies in the Apostle's argument. He is dealing with the fact that Jesus was a suffering man, and is proving that the appointment of his suffering was one that "became" God. Jesus was a man; but if he possessed at the sametime divine dignity and excellence, why, even as a man, was he subjected to sufferings equal to, nay, greatly exceeding, those of other men? It would be nugatory to assert again in such a connection that the Saviour is a man, or even to support the assertion

by quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. The latter clause of the verse at once suggests the unity which the Apostle has in his eye, "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Whom does Christ call his brethren? Not mankind generally. "Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Those which hear the word of God and do it"—those who sustain a peculiar family relation, and also possess a family likeness to himself. The passage quoted from the 22d Psalm, in which the title occurs, itself explains it—"I will declare thy name unto my brethren; *in the midst of the church* will I sing praise unto thee." The "church," those who, like him, "put" their "trust" in God, "they which be of faith," are Christ's brethren, being children of Abraham with himself. Accordingly, in the 16th verse, the Apostle having intimated that "he took not on him (the nature of) angels," does not complete the antithesis by declaring that he took on him (the nature of) man, as he would naturally have shaped his language had his object been simply to declare Christ's manhood; but "he took on him the seed of Abraham." He not only became one nature with his people, but he became their near kinsman, their brother; nay, he assumed a relation still closer, more indissoluble than this. "Not seeds as of many, but thy seed, *which is Christ.*" Jesus Christ was not merely one individual of the seed of Abraham, but he was himself in the highest sense "the seed of Abraham," to whom the promises were made. These promises spake of an innumerable multitude, indeed; and in the church of the redeemed accordingly there is "a multitude which no man can number." Yet these are, we repeat, "not seeds as of many." They are gathered "out of every nation," yet are they all *one in Christ*. "Thy seed, which is Christ."

Jesus Christ, then, is not only one nature with his people; he is one man with them, not only having a capability of sympathy with them as liable to the same frailties which he endured, but having a necessary sympathy with them as his members suffering in his body—not having a temporal or occasional sympathy with them, as one man sympathizes with his fellow-man, but as the husband with the wife, or, still nearer, the head with the members, having a necessary and never-ceasing sympathy with them as one flesh with himself.

In this mysterious and transcendent sense, "He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one;" and it was because they are thus absolutely united that it became God to make Jesus perfect through suffering—that is, to appoint him in "finishing" his people's sin, as their representative and surety, to submit to suffering and death.

He is not giving any decision upon the question of the necessity of the scheme of salvation by the work of the Son of God, or whether divine wisdom might have devised another method to accomplish the same

end. He is taking up the question of what was becoming and necessary in the divine government at a particular stage in the history of the divine plan, namely, when Jesus had already assumed a relation of unity towards his people, and he decides that "it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things,"—regarding Christ and his people as "all of one"—to assume an aspect of severity towards the righteous head, on account of the sin of the members, to decree it to be an impossible thing that the cup should pass from him, and to inspire the holy Saviour himself accordingly with such a profound resolution to encounter suffering and death in the execution of his work, as found utterance in his answer to Peter enticing him to an opposite course—"Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but those that be of men."

Thus does our text furnish the reason why "it became" God to make the Saviour a sufferer. But this is not all. In the light of the unity which it thus reveals, we see the scheme of salvation standing forth in all the grandeur and simplicity which belong to it as the very "wisdom of God," "hidden," indeed, "from the wise and prudent," yet "revealed unto babes."

The eternal Son came forth from the bosom of the Father, in order that he might sanctify the people whom the Father had given him—that he might bring them back again to fellowship with God. How was it to be accomplished? For this end, he that sanctifieth assumed a relation of unity with his believing people, of every age and nation, who were to be sanctified. "As it is written, I have made thee a Father of many nations before him whom he believed, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Being one with him, their lot is indissolubly bound up with his. If they are to be shut out from God, so must he. If he is to return to God, so must they. But he cannot be permanently cast off by the Father. Even the curse for sin cannot exclude him from the enjoyment of God's favour. He has borne the curse for his people, but he has borne it away. He has "finished transgression, and made an end of sin," and in him "the Father is well pleased." Death cannot exclude him from the fountain of life in God, for he is the "Prince of life;" and so "God hath raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Hence he had cause to express his assured expectation in the words of the Psalmist—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; thou wilt show me the path of life; in *thy presence* is fullness of joy," &c. Hence, under the pressure of his people's sin, when he was ready to be offered, he could present with confidence this prayer—"Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with

thee before the world was." This petition he offers with confidence for himself. With equal confidence does he follow it up with a like petition for his people as one with himself—"Father, I will that *they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me*; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." This prayer answered, Satan rebuked and cast down, Jesus our High Priest, for a season clothed in filthy garments, now clothed with change of raiment, and his people's iniquity passed from him (Zech. iii. 1-5), he and they appear for ever, "*made perfect in one*," in the presence of the holy God,—he rejoicing over them as his "purchased possession," as he spake by his prophet, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me;" they giving endless praise to him as their Deliverer in the joyful song of the redeemed, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hast made us *unto our God* kings and priests."

Thus it appears that the unity of Christ and his people is the fundamental principle in the plan of salvation, at once justifying and explaining all its mysterious arrangements. We have seen in the light of this unity God's plan for the restoration of his people to himself, under a general view.

Let us endeavour to obtain a nearer and more particular view of the way in which the unity of Christ and his people secures their perfect and everlasting salvation.

He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. Hence,

I. Whatever is theirs is made his.

1. *Their sin is made his.* "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." Jesus is often represented as the innocent substitute for the guilty, and so he was. "He suffered the just for the unjust." But he was not a substitute for his people as one man may be a substitute in suffering or sacrificing for his neighbour, or as the typical sin offering was substituted for the guilty transgressor under the law. God is inflexibly just, and therefore there must be not only a just punishment for sin inflicted by himself, but a just liability for sin in him who pays the penalty. But there was a just liability in Christ for the sin of his people. "He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Therefore, "he made him to be sin for us"—therefore, "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." One man may spontaneously make himself liable for his neighbour's debt. But a husband is necessarily liable for the debts of his wife, because they are "all of one." This is only a shadow of Christ's liabi-

lity for the sin of his people. Like the husband, Christ may be regarded as having spontaneously assumed the relation of unity with his spouse, but having become one flesh with her, he is, voluntarily indeed, yet necessarily, liable for her debts. Thus the sins of believers in the eye of infinite rectitude are chargeable on Christ. The principle of this imputation is asserted in our text, "He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."

2. Jesus having thus become chargeable with the guilt of his people's sin, became subject to its penal effects. With their sin, *their suffering also is made his*. "He was in all points tempted like as they are." "It became him for whom and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of the salvation *perfect through sufferings*." Why? Our text is designed to provide an answer to this question. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." He came to "sanctify" them, to fit them for approaching God, by making himself one with them. Thus Jesus took upon himself his people's sin. In order to "finish" their sin, and so "perfect" himself, he must exhaust the full cup of his people's "sufferings," the righteous penalty of their sin. Thus, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."

3. With their sin *their death also is made his*. Death was from the beginning the appointed penalty of sin. Jesus having taken into his hands the bitter cup which belonged to his people, drank it to the dregs. He not only "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant;" but having become the surety of his people, he must pay the uttermost farthing of their debt, therefore "he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Thus "He was made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." He came to sanctify his people, to expiate their sin. For this end, having become one with his people, and taken upon himself their sin, he must first of all sanctify himself. Thus, Aaron must first himself be sanctified. In the 29th chapter of Exodus, we have an account of the sanctifying of Aaron and his sons by the sprinkling on their persons of the blood of the ram of consecration. Herein was shadowed forth the sanctifying of the great High Priest with his own blood. "For their sakes I sanctify myself." "That he might sanctify the people with his own blood," he suffered, he died. The reason is assigned in our text, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." And so not only their sin, their suffering, but specially *their death, is made Christ's*.

II. In virtue of the same wonderful union between the sanctifier and

the sanctified, what is Christ's is transferred to his people. The transfer is mutual, and on both sides it is complete. Thus,

1. *His righteousness is made theirs.* "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Thus the holy God can look with complacency on "the ungodly" believing in Jesus. Not that he esteems less hateful their sin, but he looks on the face of his anointed, in whom "he sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." Not that he esteems less honourable his own law, but he accepts them "in the beloved," and he is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

2. *His death is made theirs.* He had obeyed as his people's surety and head. In the same capacity he died. Thus, when he died on the cross, his people died in him. "If one died for all, then were all dead," or "then have all died." This is the glorious security, the unchangeable consolation of his people, that having died in their surety, their salvation, in the most important sense of the word, is already accomplished. The faithful and true witness expired with the announcement on his lips, "It is finished." What was finished by Christ's dying on the cross?

Sin, as respects its curse, was finished to the people of Christ. Thus he hath "finished transgression and made an end of sin."

Satan's authority, and so with it the dominion of sin, was finished to the people of Christ. Where the curse of God lies, sin reigns uncontrolled. God leaves the sinner in righteous judgment to be "led captive by the devil at his will." "An evil spirit from God" is made the instrument of executing upon him the divine vengeance. Thus, the world having cast off God, it is left to the dominion of Satan as its prince. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." The Almighty Redeemer has come into the heart of Satan's dominion to rescue his people from his power. He accomplishes it by first of all redeeming them from the curse. Christ having died an accursed death for his people, Satan's right and authority to reign over them is for ever destroyed. Thus "by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil." This explains the Apostle's argument in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid, how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein." "*Dead to sin!*" Does he here argue from the completeness of the victory over indwelling sin which Christian believers have already achieved? Alas! poor security would this be to the most advanced believer upon earth. We might rejoine, "if thou thinkest that thou thus standest, take heed lest thou fall." The Apostle ever speaks of his actual attainments in another strain. "Not as though I had already attained,

either were already perfect." "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." The "body of sin" in the Christian, then, is far from being dead, yet he, the believer, is "dead to sin;" and "how shall we that are dead to sin," says the Apostle, "live any longer therein." The Apostle knew that, in common with all believers, "he stood by faith." He is giving expression, then, not to a fact in his character, but to a privilege of his state, as he apprehended it by faith. He argues from the completeness of the victory which he and all believers had achieved over the great enemy in Christ. Satan's right to tyrannize over them was finished—his power to lead them captive at his will was broken in the death of Christ; and so the Apostle immediately adds, "know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized *into his death*." Having entered into conflict with our enemy, then, in our surety and head—having in Christ triumphed over Satan, and broken his galling chain, this being the very deliverance and freedom which the grace of Christ in his dying hath achieved for us, it were not only a wickedness but an absurdity and a contradiction to propose such a thing as our continuing in sin that grace may abound.

Yet, again, Christ's death being made theirs, *the dominion of death* over all that are Christ's was finished in him. To Christ's people, Death itself died in Christ. He drunk the cup to the dregs—he exhausted the penalty due for their sin. Sin, the sting of death, being extracted—the law, the strength of sin, being satisfied, believers are now delivered from death and the fear of death by Christ. On a principle which will be explained, they must in a certain sense still die; but death in its original sense—death as the effect of the curse—death as an enemy, is "abolished" in Christ. Thus "he that liveth and believeth in Christ, shall never die."

3. *Christ's resurrection*, as well as his death, is *made theirs*. In the person of their Head they have already risen and taken possession of their inheritance. Hence, the language of the Apostle, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." If "their treasure was in heaven with Christ, their hearts would be there also."

So much for Christ's finished work. It is transferred with all its benefits to his people. Thus we may already "speak comfortably" to them that are in Christ, and assure them, that in the most important sense their "warfare is accomplished," as well as that "their sin is pardoned." That is, in so far as Christ's warfare is accomplished, so is theirs, since "He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one." But Christ's warfare in one important view is not yet accomplished. He has a finished—he has also a yet unfinished work. He has already tri-

umphed over the power of Satan, but Satan is not yet "bound." He is not yet "bruised under the feet" of the saints—he is still deceiving the nations of the world, and tempting and harassing the followers of Christ. Christ is "waiting till his enemies be made his footstool." He is still going forth as the captain of his people's salvation, against the power of the enemy, "conquering and to conquer." Like the finished, so the unfinished work of Christ is transferred to his people. The finished work is made theirs in its fruits. They had no actual share in its performance. In the hour, and under the power of darkness, the disciples do not even "watch" with him; "they leave him alone." It is otherwise with the unfinished work. Here they are "fellow-workers with God." It is made theirs not only in its fruits, but in the fellowship of its accomplishment.

They have already in Christ expiated the guilt of their sin and overcome its power. It still remains for them to suffer with Christ in contending against their conquered, yet living and struggling, foe. They must yet maintain a painful warfare against Satan, in order that, his power being already subjugated, his works may be finally destroyed.

Thus they suffer with Christ in contending against their own sin. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (1 Peter iv. 1.) They that are Christ's "know him in the fellowship of his sufferings." They "have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Their "old man is crucified with him"—not dead, yet crucified,—still living indeed, yet nailed to the cross, and doomed ere long to expire.

They suffer with Christ, too, in contending against sin in the church and the world. They are called as good soldiers of Jesus Christ to fight the continuation of his battles against the wickedness that prevails around. This is Christ's work, and in carrying it on they must ever be looking unto Jesus, considering him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that after his example they may resist even unto blood, striving against sin. When in this spirit they suffer for righteousness sake, it is truly Christ that is suffering in his members. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Thus was the great Apostle taught the mystery which he afterwards declared concerning his own sufferings in the service of the Redeemer. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of *the sufferings of Christ in my flesh* for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. i. 24.) "In all their afflictions he is afflicted." He is not only capable of thus sympathizing because he is a man, but he necessarily thus sym-

pathizes as one man with his people; for "he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one."

These are the afflictions peculiar to the people of Christ. But the same afflictions are besides accomplished in them that are in the world. Hence, the men of the world cannot apprehend that the condition of the saints is essentially different from their own. Is the curse then still lying in any sense upon them as upon the world? No! Jesus was made a "curse for them." "He bare their sicknesses, carried their sorrows." Whence then sickness and sorrow to the people of God? This is no dark token of the Divine anger still resting upon them—no indication that it has been only doubtfully or imperfectly appeased. On the contrary, to believers it is a token of the perfectness of that unity by which they are related to the Saviour. If "he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified" be all of one, then while he took on him their sorrows, they in their turn must share in his. Afflicted believer, this is not your sorrow, but Christ's. Dying believer, this is not your death, but Christ's. The sorrow and the death which you are called to pass through, are without a sting. Your sorrow is not sorrow, for your very mourning Christ pronounces blessed. While "the afflictions of Christ abound in you, your consolation aboundeth also by Christ." Your death is not death. To lie down in the grave with Jesus, is only to "fall asleep." It is not to lose your life, but to receive a new and more glorious life with Christ.

Who then would not covet to be one with Christ? Blessed people indeed. All things are yours, especially "he that sanctifieth" is yours, and thus you shall be sanctified and brought to glory infallibly by him. This were enough to compensate for many ills in your lot. But your present lot, although less sensibly, is no less surely blessed than your eternal state. He is bringing you to glory, and he is accompanying you himself on the way; and although it seems often dark and rugged, yet it is the right way, and every step is leading you nearer to your Father's house, and all things are working together for your everlasting good.

Who would not covet such a lot? and who needs to come short of it? None is excluded except him who excludes himself. It is a great thing truly to become indissolubly one with the Divine Redeemer. But the privilege is open to every sinner through faith. Jesus says, "Come unto me;" and again, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Do you believe this, then obey his invitation, and come to Jesus. Resolve that you will be satisfied with nothing less than a present, a close, an eternal union with Christ. "Where thou dwellest, I will dwell, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

SERMON CIII.

CHRIST'S DEATH EFFECTUAL FOR THE SALVATION OF THE ELECT ONLY.

BY THE REV. HENRY MONCREIFF, EAST KILBRIDE.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—ROMANS viii. 32

THE words of the text present a peculiar argument in the midst of a very powerful and animated passage. Upon the face of the argument, taken by itself, it appears that the Apostle's object was, to prove to the Roman converts the certainty of God's "freely giving all things" to them. With a view to this object, he assumes, as one of his premises, that, on their account, God had not spared his own Son, but had delivered him up for them. His other premise, on which the force of the argument mainly turns, seems to lie in the principle, that God's giving up his Son in the manner referred to, implies such an amount of Divine favour towards those for whom he does so, as necessarily to involve an assurance of his bestowing upon them every needful blessing. From the gift of God's own Son having been already vouchsafed, Paul infers that nothing else would be withheld.

This reasoning would be altogether ineffective, unless the parties to whom the prospect is held out of *God freely giving them all things*, were the very same parties for whom it is intimated that *God had delivered up his Son*. The natural and not easily resisted inference is, that, in the view of Paul, every man for whom Christ died or was delivered up will certainly receive all other benefits. If, then, it were meant to be indicated, by the first clause of the text, that Christ died for all men, the last clause would appear to signify that all men will be saved. How carefully, my friends, ought we to beware of any such superficial impression respecting the use of a general or universal term by an inspired writer, as may lead to the opinion of universal salvation—an opinion no less alluring to the flesh than it is thoroughly unscriptural and awfully dangerous.

When any one makes use of the words "*us all*," either in conversation or in a written document, his meaning depends entirely on what he

has been previously speaking or writing about, and on the particular manner on which he has, by his language, been connecting his own condition with that of others. If he have referred to himself simply as a human being, then, by "*us all*," he undoubtedly means the whole human race. But, if he have been addressing his fellow-townsmen or his fellow-tradesmen regarding some of the peculiarities of his own town or his own trade, he is understood to include *all those only* who belong to that town or are engaged in that trade. Were we to find the apostle, in the previous part of the chapter, directing attention to what is common to all mankind, we might be obliged to apply the first clause of the text to all mankind. On the supposition, however, that he has been exhibiting the privileges of a distinct set of persons, among whom he and those addressed by him are to be considered as included, his language is not fairly applicable to any others.

The character of the argument, moreover, as set forth in the few emphatic words before us, may be better understood when we take it in connection with the rest of the passage where it occurs. Let us, therefore, consider how its several parts are illustrated by the context. With this design, I shall call your attention,

- I. To what the Apostle desired to prove;
- II. To the nature of the fact, in his own condition and in that of the Roman converts, which he takes as the foundation of his proof;
- III. To the nature of the principle by means of which he connects that fact with his conclusion; and,
- IV. To the value of the argument.

I. Let us consider what the Apostle desired to prove. None will dispute his intention, in this chapter, to show, that the most grievous sufferings of a worldly kind, and even death in its worst form, would do no substantial injury to himself and his Roman brethren. He says, in the 17th verse, that they were "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;" adding these remarkable words, "if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together: for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." In the 28th verse, he arrives at this comprehensive declaration, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called, according to his purpose"—manifestly implying, that even the sorest tribulations of their lives would, beyond all question, contribute to their eventual welfare. It farther appears, from the 29th verse, that their afflictions were regarded by him as arising, in part, from such a fore-ordained conformity to the image of their blessed Lord as required them

to have fellowship with him in his sufferings, in order that, in those sufferings, as well as in other respects, the only-begotten Son of God might be, as to his human nature, "the first born among many brethren."

Upon the certainty of this Divine arrangement, the questions in the 31st verse seem, in no small measure, founded—"What," he asks, "shall we, then, say to these things; if God be for us, who can be against us?" He here argues to the following effect—"If our most terrible distresses be clear marks of our Father's determination that, as the brethren of his Son, and his own dear children, we shall be, in every way, conformed to the likeness of our elder brother; oh, why should we be discouraged, and why should we repine, even under the heaviest pressure of earthly woe? How can that be against us which is sent by one who commands all things, and is undoubtedly on our side? The men who took, and, by wicked hands, crucified and slew the Lord of glory, did so, only when he was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and therefore the resources of worldly power did not enable their bitter hostility to prevail permanently against his righteous cause. If, then, we be now oppressed or threatened by the strong and cruel ones of the earth, let us look to *them* as Divine instruments, whereby our conformity to Christ's image is increased, and our meetness for his kingdom accelerated. God is *for* us, and none can be against us."

It is evident that the Apostle had also in view an assurance of permanent freedom from the condemning power of the Divine law. Having already, in the third chapter of this epistle, confuted the Jewish prepossessions as to justification by the law in whole or in part, and having shown, that, as "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," so "no flesh living shall be justified by the deeds of the law"—(Romans iii. 20-23)—he proceeds to affirm, at the outset of the eighth chapter, that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit;" adding, that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made him free from the law of sin and death." He maintains, in the 29th and 30th verses, that the privileges of himself and brethren, as "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," were made absolutely and irrevocably sure to them by the fixed order of the Divine counsels. If it were certain that God foreknew them and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son, both in present sufferings and in future glory—if it were certain that God, in the carrying out of an eternal decree, had called them effectually to the saving knowledge of himself—then it was equally certain, that, by virtue of the same decree, God had caused their justification to be so thorough and complete, as to ensure their final glorification. "For whom he did

predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

The pointed questions in the next verse have thus a clear application to deliverance from all well-grounded fear of condemnation by the law. In addition to what has already been suggested, they seem to involve the following considerations: "What shall we say to these things? How can Jewish or carnal prejudice evade the force of these solemn and divinely attested realities? Why allow our sinful doubts to keep us back any longer from full confidence in Christ? If God be *for* us, who can be against us? If God have justified us in Christ, how can the law be against us any more for ever? Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Romans x. 4.)

We have not yet exhausted the meaning of the questions. It was Paul's object to assure his Roman brethren of a victory over every corrupt influence which could assail their souls. He had complained, at the close of the preceding chapter, of the *sin that dwelt in him* as causing him to do the things which he would not, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which was in his members. (Romans vii. 17-23.) In the 24th verse, he had summed up his description of the painful struggle within his breast with this woful exclamation, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But his hearty utterance of thanks to God through Jesus Christ, in the very next verse, must have been intimately connected with the comforting and elevating declarations which come immediately afterwards in the eighth chapter. That expression of gratitude must have been called forth by the firm belief, that his conquest over sin and Satan, though impossible to be achieved by flesh and blood, was unchangeably secure, through a strength greater than his own.

When he speaks, in the eighth chapter, of those that are after the flesh minding the things of the flesh—of those that are after the spirit minding the things of the spirit, and of the impossibility of those pleasing God who are in the flesh, in contrast with the condition of those who can and do please God, because the Spirit of God dwelleth in them, he appears to have much satisfaction in the consciousness of Divine influence working mightily in his soul. (Romans viii. 5-10.) When he alludes to men mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit, and intimates that thus they shall live—when he identifies such as are led by the Spirit of God with the children of God—when he says that he and his brethren had received the spirit of adoption whereby they cried, "Abba, Father," and that the Spirit himself bore witness with their spirits, that they were the children of God—(Romans viii. 13-16)—when he refers to the Spirit helping their infirmities, because

they knew not what they should pray for as they ought, and to the Spirit making intercession for them with groanings that could not be uttered—when, in that connection, he declares that “all things work together for good to them that love God”—and when, finally, he confirms the certainty of this universal working for good, by pointing out how all the steps of a true Christian’s spiritual history depend on the Divine fore-knowledge and predestination, and are linked together in an indissoluble chain—how such as have been predestinated to be conformed to Christ’s image are infallibly called in an effectual manner—how such as are effectually called are infallibly justified—and how such as are justified are infallibly glorified—(Romans viii. 26–30.)—what ground is there for doubting that the efficacious grace of the Holy Ghost, without which none can please God, either by faith in his word or by active service, is meant to be set forth as the sure and abiding portion of Paul and the Roman converts? The comforts of the Spirit’s presence and agency are more dwelt upon throughout the chapter than any other kind of consolation. The 31st verse must therefore indicate, that, as God was on their side, not one of their spiritual enemies would be able to subdue them, but that, by Almighty power, they would surely triumph over the old serpent, and maintain their faith and patience unshaken to the end.

The scope of the previous context is thus to fortify the minds of the true disciples at Rome against every existing or apprehended evil, whether temporal or spiritual, and to make them feel confident of ultimate safety and lasting glory. The words of the text *must* be intended to magnify and complete the force of the reasoning—to show that God’s favour towards these men was so marvellously great as to leave no room for hesitation with respect to his bestowing every necessary benefit upon them, or his overruling all circumstances for their good—and to prepare the way for the bold and confident, yet beautiful and deeply earnest language with which the chapter is concluded. “Who shall separate us,” asks Paul, “from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written; For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans viii. 35–end.)

The assurance of permanent freedom from the condemning power of the divine law, is shown to be specially involved in the argument of the text, by what appears in the two immediately following verses. The

apostle there winds up his statements on the subject of justification, by referring to the death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and intercession of Christ, as together constituting the main and impregnable basis on which he builds his case. "Who shall lay anything," he asks, "to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It will scarcely be denied that this representation was meant to exhibit, in a light peculiarly striking, that impossibility of separation from the love of God in Christ, on which the apostle enlarges so emphatically and richly in the remainder of the chapter. Nor can it be reasonably doubted that his persuasion of security comprehended the conviction of no influence of any kind being able, either then or thereafter, to alter or defeat the act of justification, wherewith his judge had blessed him.

When, moreover, in the 38th and 39th verses, he speaks of death, and life, and angels, and principalities, and powers, and things present, and things to come, and height, and depth, and any other creature, does he not thereby refer to the temptations by which he was beset, not only from the men and things of a present evil world, but from fallen angels, from the powers of darkness, from the rulers of spiritual wickedness in high places? Does he not thereby explain his declaration in the 37th verse, as implying that he would, through Christ, more than conquer every one of these mighty foes? And must not, therefore, the intention of the text have been to convey to the mind an irresistible impression of the infallible safety of the saints, amid all assaults whatsoever, wherewith the devil or the world may visit them?

Finally, it being the object of the apostle to prove these comprehensive and satisfactory truths, nothing can be clearer than that he is exhibiting the high privileges of a peculiar people. Nor can the assurance conveyed in the text be safely or warrantably applied, except to those who are enrolled among that people, and marked by *their* peculiarities.

II. We are thus led to enquire as to the nature of the fact in the condition of Paul and the Roman converts, which he takes as the foundation of his proof.

That fact, as stated by him, is simply that, on their account, God had not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for them all. The question which we have chiefly to consider under this head, is whether the delivering up of Christ here spoken of, signify the bestowal of a blessing that is common to all mankind, or the granting of a privilege to a chosen people. In other words, we have to enquire whether the sacri-

rice of Jesus on the cross be here referred to as only removing, according to the language of some, the barriers that stood in the way of man's restoration to divine favour, or as actually securing that restoration itself. In prosecuting the enquiry, we may attend, *first*, to the evidence furnished by the scope and bearing of the argument before us, as illustrated by the context, and *secondly*, to the light which other parts of Scripture throw on the nature of the sacrifice or delivering up of Christ.

With respect to the scope and bearing of the argument, one thing is manifest, viz., That if the circumstance of Christ having been delivered up for Paul and his Roman brethren, do not mean that God had done more for *them* than he had done for all mankind, then it will not avail to the proof of the apostle's conclusion, except on the unscriptural supposition that all mankind will be saved. For if God's not sparing his own Son were for the sake of those who perish as well as those who attain to everlasting life, the token of divine love thus vouchsafed, however great and liberal it may be, cannot make any man certain of enjoying the blessings of Christ's kingdom. A more direct contradiction than this could scarcely be given to the inference of the text. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, *how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*"

Some are accustomed to evade such views of the matter, by suggesting that the prospect of receiving all things is suspended on the continued fidelity of the parties, as genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus. But were the genuine discipleship of the Roman converts to be held as a necessary and independent part of the proof, which must be added to the circumstance of Christ having been delivered up for them, in order to make the conclusion true, that God would freely give them all things, then the delivering up of Christ would not of itself lead to that conclusion; and the security of God's people for his promised benefits would be based, not simply on the merits and sufferings of a crucified Redeemer, but fully as much on the reality and steadfastness of their own faith. There is no ground for reducing the argument to so mixed and diluted a form, to be discovered either in the text or context. On the contrary, while in doing so we contradict the context in its whole substance and spirit, we utterly destroy the special impressiveness of the text.

According to the representations of Paul, both in this and other passages, neither the beginning nor the continuance of true faith and spiritual obedience arise from the exercise of men's native powers. He attributes both entirely to the sovereign exercise of God's free grace. In the third verse of this chapter, he represents God as sending his own Son, for the purpose of accomplishing what the law could not do through the weakness of the flesh; and he connects that representation with the

following doctrines—viz., that justified persons are made free from the law of sin and death, not through the law of man's free-will, but through the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans viii. 2)—that the carnal mind (or natural mind of man) cannot be subject to the law of God (verse 7)—that they that are in the flesh (or in their natural unconverted state) cannot please God (verse 8)—that the same Spirit, whose power raised Jesus from the dead, and will one day raise the bodies of his saints, dwells now in their souls for maintaining and strengthening the spiritual life; and that, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his (verse 9). The Apostle elsewhere announces, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. ii. 14.) In the verses immediately preceding and following the text, he clearly ascribes the faith and obedience of the Roman converts to God's predestination and effectual calling; and we have seen it to be his object to prove that, while Satan, the world, and the corruptions of the natural heart are too powerful for human strength to overcome, no spiritual enemy, however formidable, will be able to separate God's elect people from his love; but divine strength will be perfected in their weakness, and the divine name glorified in the fulness of their victory.

The continued fidelity of the saints thus appears as one of the spiritual blessings included in the assurance which the text presents. There is a supposition, however, by which the heavenly origin of faith is attempted to be reconciled with the evasion of which I speak. Paul is thought to intimate to such as have been effectually called and justified, that the same fatherly love, which, through the sacrifice of Christ, gave an opportunity of salvation to *them*, as well as to all mankind, while still unconverted, will much more, *now that they have been enabled by the Spirit to embrace that opportunity*, supply them with every other needful benefit. By this interpretation, the fact of a man's effectual calling and conversion through the Spirit's influence, is made an essential part of the argument. The reasoning in the text would thereby be reduced to the following: "Since God has not only delivered up his own Son for us, but has also bestowed upon us the additional and decisive favour of effectually calling and converting us, we may be satisfied that he will also freely give us all things." Whatever might be the value of such reasoning, it is quite different from the reasoning which the words of Paul naturally suggest. The force of the one lies in the fact of God not having spared but delivered up his Son. The force of the other lies in the fact of God having worked effectually by his Spirit. If, to render the argument sound, it be necessary to assume the circumstance of a man's conversion by the Spirit, then the not sparing of

God's own Son, however much it may display of divine love, does not prove the apostle's conclusion, nor serve the purpose for which it was adduced.

That purpose was, that it might come in at the close of a series of arguments all tending to the same point, as a crowning and super-eminent consideration by which the series is completed, and the conclusion rendered irresistible. The force of other reasonings had already been exhausted. The Holy Spirit had been referred to as bearing witness with the spirits of the saints, that they were the children of God—as enabling them to see his first fruits in themselves—and as helping their infirmities, (v. 16, 23, 26.) This experience of spiritual influences had already been appealed to, as fitted to make them confident that all things were working for their good. The chain of God's gracious purposes and acts towards them—a chain embracing the work of the Spirit at every point—had been powerfully described. And the Apostle had already asked in triumph, “What shall we say to these things?” (v. 28–31.) *These things* furnished unanswerable proof. But *the not sparing of God's own Son gave stronger evidence still*. The death of Jesus, as explained and confirmed by his resurrection, exaltation, and ascension, was, of itself, by far the most effective argument. It is here brought forward in the very form in which it might have told with surpassing power, had it been employed in heaven to display to holy angels the blessed prospects of some of the chosen ones of earth, long before their actual conversion had taken place. Even then the inference might have been justly drawn from Christ having died for them, that they would surely participate in all the benefits of redemption. On the supposition of the previous operation of the Spirit in conversion being assumed to render the argument conclusive, its peculiar strength and beauty are immediately lost; for thus the gift of God's own Son, in place of comprehending all other gifts, as Paul's language leads us to believe, requires the addition of another most precious gift, as security for the enjoyment of any one of the blessings of salvation.

The confirmation which these views derive from those portions of Scripture wherein the nature of the sacrifice or delivering up of Christ is explained or illustrated, can receive no justice in the present discourse. I can only allude to the leading points which they exhibit. They show that the Redeemer suffered as *an actual substitute in the room of sinners*. They show that his substitution for sinners involved his *actually bearing the burden of their guilt*, and his *actually redeeming them from the necessity of bearing it themselves*.

Under the ceremonial law of the Jews, no sacrifices were appointed to be offered for the sins of murder and adultery. The penalty of death

was attached to these grave offences. Although they might be truly pardoned by God, through faith in the promises and with a view to eternity, they were not permitted to be pardoned outwardly in the temporal government of Israel. No external atonement, therefore, was made on their account. (Exod. xxi. 12, 29; Lev. xx. 10.) The blood of bulls and goats, while allowed to free from the temporal results of some inferior trespasses and pollutions, was intended thus to shadow forth the efficacy of the only sacrifice which could really take away sin. (Lev. ix., xiv., xv.; Heb. ix. 23 to end; x. 1-10.) According to the divine scheme, the shedding of blood in cases in which there was to be no remission of a penalty, would have produced a false and inconsistent impression. When the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt, the paschal lamb was substituted in place of the first-born of each family upon whose door-posts its blood was sprinkled. And whenever, in subsequent times, a bloody sacrifice was offered, the victim was regarded as a substitute suffering in the room of the party in whose name the offering was made; and that party was, consequently, relieved from what would otherwise have been the judicial results of the thing atoned for. (Exod. xii. 13, 23; Lev. xvi.)

In accordance with such typical indications, the true Lamb of God is set forth by the Prophet Isaiah, as justifying many by bearing their iniquities, and as thus seeing of the travail of his soul so as to be satisfied. On the other hand, the Lord is said to have laid upon him the iniquities of all the sheep who had gone astray, while they are described as healed by his stripes. (Is. liii. 5, 6, 11.) Again, in the New Testament, the Apostle Peter tells the true members of the Church that they had been healed by the stripes of Jesus, who his own self bore their sins in his own body on the tree. (1 Pet. ii. 24.) Paul tells us, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and, in the Epistle to the Galatians, that Christ has redeemed those on whom the blessing of Abraham comes, from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. (Heb. ix. 28; Gal. iii. 13, 14.) In the 5th chapter of this Epistle to the Romans, at the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, he appears to represent the justification of sinners by the blood of Christ, and their reconciliation to God, as inseparably bound up with the truth that Christ has died for them. "God commendeth," he says, "his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

It thus appears that Christ, by the sacrifice of himself, has been made

a curse for the people whom he came to save ; that He, in *their room*, has suffered the punishment due to their sins ; that *their* justification and reconciliation have, consequently, been secured through his death ; and that *his* stripes have obtained the spiritual healing of *their* souls.

It does not affect the truth of these conclusions that, in the order of time, men are not actually justified or reconciled to God until, through the grace of the Spirit in the new birth, they are led to believe in Christ as he is set forth in the gospel. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. iii. 8.) The saints under the old dispensation were justified through the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, though it was not destined to be offered for centuries to come. He, who sees the end from the beginning, looked on them as washed in the blood of the Lamb, long before that blood was shed. (Heb. xi. 13, 39.) And so now, to the eye of the infinite and all-seeing Jehovah, the case of every true believer is the same as if the atonement for his sins had not been made till the moment before his own conversion. All his spiritual privileges are as closely associated with the shedding of the precious blood that flowed on Calvary as if it had flowed for *him* alone, and as if the instantaneous effect of its flowing had been *his* spiritual regeneration. In the order of time, that regeneration has been postponed for centuries. In the order of God's counsels, it followed as the certain consequence of an all-sufficient expiation.

The Apostle *does* take for granted, in the words of the text, that the persons spoken of were genuine disciples of Christ ; for, though this circumstance forms no part of his argument, it was the divinely appointed evidence by which alone the truth of the fact assumed by him, in its application to *them*, could be ascertained by the human understanding. (1 John iii. 19.) "The secret things belong unto God." He knows his elect, even while they are still sunk in the depths of spiritual darkness and depravity. The good Shepherd knows his own sheep, though not yet gathered into the fold. "But those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children." (Deut. xxix. 29 ; Ephes. i. ii. ; John x. 16.) We may profitably meditate on God's sovereign election, if it serve to humble us and fill our hearts with godly awe, or if it heighten the admiration and reverence with which we contemplate His glorious ways ; but we have nothing to do with it as respects the objects of his choice, except in so far as we can trace the marks, in ourselves or others, of that new creation of the soul in Christ Jesus which uniformly results from it.

Our *way of access* to an interest in the promises of grace is by a plain and open door. "I am the door," says our gracious Lord himself, "by me if *any man* enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture." (John

x. 9.) "Look unto me," says the Almighty Saviour, "look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." (Is. xlv. 22.) "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." (John vi. 37.) "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Is. lv. 1.) "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) If we turn away from the open door on account of its straitness, or if we reject the free invitation to partake of heavenly nourishment, because we do not hunger or thirst for it, the guilt and the folly will be all our own, and our condemnation will at last appear as just as our punishment will be terrible. But if we flee for refuge to the gate of mercy, and wait patiently upon God, as we walk along the narrow path, then, being justified by faith, we shall have peace with our heavenly Father—then, we shall rejoice even in tribulation—then, we shall discover in our souls the signs of that good work which, once begun, will be performed unto the day of Jesus Christ—and then, our hearts will both safely and joyfully respond to the high and enrapturing argument, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. v. 1-5.)

III. Let us now attend to the nature of the principle by which the Apostle connects the fact assumed by him with his conclusion.

I have represented that principle to be, That God's giving up his Son in the manner referred to, implies such an amount of divine favour towards those for whom he does so, as necessarily to involve an assurance of his bestowing upon them every needful blessing. But this representation requires to be more particularly explained and developed.

An exhibition of character and disposition may be furnished by a single act. When we know a party to be possessed of firmness and decision, we may often infer with safety what he will hereafter do, from what he has already done. Special instances of conduct, moreover, may be observed, which, taken alone, are sufficient to satisfy us, both as to the fixedness of the character and as to the strength of the disposition that have given rise to them.

No comparison drawn from human life can adequately illustrate the character and proceedings of the Almighty. Nor, especially, can any mere human transaction convey a just idea respecting the nature and consequences of the wonder which was wrought, when God spared not his own Son, and Christ poured out his soul unto death. Nevertheless, the argument of the text appeals to the same sober judgment and the same

appreciation of moral consistency and excellence, which would lead to just conclusions in estimating the tendencies and designs of some of our fellow mortals. The offering up of Jesus in the room of the guilty is indeed an act which admits of no parallel; but it is all the more, on that account, a marked demonstration of the character of the Godhead, and of the disposition and purposes of our Heavenly Father towards sinners of mankind.

It may be viewed either as *the means of reconciling the claims of divine justice with the salvation of man*, or as *an exhibition of divine love*, or as *a manifestation of the divine glory*.

1. Let us view it first of all as *the means of reconciling the claims of divine justice with the salvation of man*. We believe, according to the Scriptures, that God is infinitely good—that he is love itself—that his tender mercy is over all his works, and that nothing comes in the way of the enjoyment, by his creatures, of his favour and blessing, except the necessity of maintaining his justice in the punishment of those to whom the guilt of sin attaches, and who are consequently deprived of spiritual life and heavenly fellowship. (1 John iv. 8-16. Ps. cxlv. 9. Eph. ii. 1-3. John iii. 36.) But in order to meet this difficulty, and extend his goodness even to the chief of sinners, he has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up as an atoning sacrifice. “The Lord has laid upon” Jesus “the iniquity of” all the sheep. Jesus has been “wounded for *their* transgressions.” “The chastisement of *their* peace was upon him.” He bore *their* sins in his own body on the tree.” He took the burden of *their* guilt upon himself, and suffered the punishment which *they* had justly incurred. (Isaiah liii. 1 Peter ii. 24.)

Can there be a doubt, then, as to the determination of the Most High to recover and bless these straying sheep, *in whose room* his own Son has endured the extremity of woe? Shall that Son not “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied?” (Isaiah liii. 11.) Can the penalty be exacted a second time? If nothing can now be laid to their charge—if the requirements of justice have been fulfilled with respect to them—if the judge himself have, *at so mighty a cost*, effected their redemption, what power, what circumstance, in heaven or earth or hell, can prevent their possession of the purchased benefits? The fixedness of the divine purpose to vindicate, on the one hand, the unbending purity and majesty of the Godhead in the punishment of sin, and to accomplish, on the other, the everlasting salvation of sinners, could not have been more conspicuously displayed than by the sacrifice of the cross. The *effectiveness* of that sacrifice implies the *certain* reaping of its fruits. If, by *it*, the demands of God’s law have been satisfied, *then* there is nothing to hinder his *goodness* from freely flowing towards his redeemed children. *They*

may confidently ask, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, *how* shall he not with him also *freely* give us all things?"

2. The Atonement, however, must be particularly contemplated, as *an exhibition of divine love*. In describing the relation which the death of Christ bears to the condition of the saints, it is not enough to say that it enables the divine goodness to emanate upon them without restraint. It is itself a bright and wondrous emanation of peculiar love towards *them personally*, not in their new character of justified and sanctified persons, but in their old character of guilty and corrupted rebels. While "dead in trespasses and sins," their Heavenly Father loved and pitied them, and sent his Son to save them. "When" they "were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love toward" them, "in that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them." (Ephesians ii. 1. Romans v. 6-8.) The "*righteousness*" of Jehovah might have been amply vindicated through the condemnation and destruction of an apostate race. But divine love produced another course.

How inconceivably great and endearing must the love of the Father towards his only-begotten Son have ever been! Who, then, can estimate the intensity of the love for sinners of mankind which caused that Well-beloved one to suffer and die in their behalf? *What else* can be refused or withheld by a Divine affection, which, to satisfy its longings, did not spare "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person?" (Hebrews i. 3.) The favourable disposition of the God-head towards the parties for whom Christ died, is, *by his death*, made far too clear and unequivocal to admit of its ever failing them in any of their times of need. It has given them an *Almighty*, yet a suffering, Saviour—clothed, at the same time, in the essential attributes of their own nature; and it will surely give them the strength and blessing obtained by that Saviour's blood, to cheer and guide them amid the trials and conflicts which the world or Satan may bring upon them. "*He* that spared not *his own Son*, but delivered him up for us all, how shall *He* not with *Him* also freely give us all things?"

3. While we mark with submission and gratitude the combined display of rigid justice and unconquerable love which the cross of Calvary sets forth, we are required, at the same time, to behold with admiration, how, in that cross, God's *word is magnified* above all his name, and *his glory manifested* by things of majesty and beauty, such as no created intelligence had ever seen before, though now "the angels desire to look into them." (Psalm cxxxviii. 2.; 1 Peter i. 12.) But where would be the majesty and beauty of that King, who comes "with dyed gar-

ments from Bozrah ;" "glorious in his apparel," "travelling in the greatness of his strength ;" "speaking in righteousness, mighty to save ;" after having been "bruised and put to grief by the Lord," and after having had "his soul made an offering for sin"—(Isaiah lxiii. 1 ; liii. 10)—where, I ask, would be the glory of such an one, were he not, according to the promise, to *see his seed*, and were the pleasure of the Lord, in the salvation of lost souls, *not to prosper in his hand* ? How well warranted was the language of Paul, when, after speaking of the fore-ordained conformity of the saints to Christ's likeness as tending to exalt Christ to be the first-born among many brethren, he exclaimed in the name of all true believers, "He that *spared not* his own Son, but *delivered him up* for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us *all things* ?"

The views now suggested seem to be identified with the argument of the text ; and if so, it is, in its direct application, an argument for *the peculiar people of God* and not for *all mankind*.

IV. Let me then call your attention, in conclusion, to *the value* of that argument.

The direct application of the Apostle's language, is to make believers feel that the greatness of the sacrifice already offered up on their account should sustain their spirits under the pressure of all "the ills which flesh is heir to," and all the temptations which Satan plies. The assurance of their heavenly Father's love is held out as the means of turning even the hour of bitter sorrow into a precious season of sanctified joy. Who, then, can question the incalculable value of such an argument ? If a man's faith be strong, and his spiritual perceptions clear, so that he habitually realizes his union with the blessed Saviour, his sense of the divine love must become, in the apostle's view, an universal remedy for every trouble, whether mental or bodily—a "balm in Gilead," imparting fresh spiritual health and vigour, which triumph over the weaknesses of the flesh, and which never can decay. (Jeremiah viii. 22.)

The thought of Christ dying for all mankind, in the exercise of a love of which the finally impenitent are as much the objects as the good Shepherd's little flock, can give no such confidence to the soul, of victory over spiritual enemies or of good coming out of affliction, as will make it tranquil in every struggle. But the thought of God's everlasting and unchangeable love, manifested, through the Spirit, to the soul, in the cross of Christ—this, and this alone, will warrantably fill the heart with rapture and bright hope. Why, then, is there so little experience of so delightful and so scriptural a state of mind ? Why, but because faith is lamentably weak, spiritual diligence is lamentably wanting, prayer is

unsteady and infrequent—men do not “follow on to know the Lord;” and professing Christians have come to be contented with a small measure of Christian attainment, and a very defective supply of spiritual enjoyment. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Let us strive, let us pray, to live up to the privileges within our reach—to live above the world—to live as ever seeing Him who is invisible. “The life that we now lead in the flesh, let us live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.” (Galatians ii. 20.)

The argument of the text has no direct application to the *unconverted*; but it *has* a value, even with respect to *them*. Have any of you been hitherto living without God in the world, unmoved by the terrors of hell, and uninfluenced, in your daily walk, by the promises of the gospel? You are invited to turn from this your folly, and to partake of a blessedness freely offered to you. You may see the danger of neglecting the invitation, if you contemplate disease, and poverty, and pain, and death itself, as awful intimations of God’s wrath against sinners; and if you compare the melancholy prospect with the denunciations of the inspired Word. But if you wish to conceive aright of the blessedness in which you are asked to participate, consider, I beseech you, the language of the text. You are entreated to come to Jesus, that in *him* you may find a healing for every wound, an effective consolation in every distress, and a sure resource in every difficulty. You are called to a fellowship in which you need fear no evil; but, when the winds are raging and the stream is beating, may feel that your house stands upon a rock, and never can be moved. (Luke vi. 48.) Oh seek, then, that by grace you may attain this blessedness, and be not satisfied until you can say, in all the fulness of the apostle’s meaning, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?”

SERMON CIV.

UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION SUBVERSIVE OF THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

BY THE REV. JAMES LEWIS, LEITH.

“ And that will by no means clear the guilty.”—Exod. xxxiv. 7.

THERE is not, in one view, a sentence of greater terror in the whole range of Scripture than the brief one of this passage, when we consider Him who speaks and what is declared. They are Jehovah's words in the midst of a full, formal, solemn revelation of his character—words not casually spoken, but the Lord's own account of his glorious name—of his essential, unchangeable, all perfect character. He will by no persuasion, by no arguments, no entreaties, no appeals to his pity, compassion, tenderness, or mercy—by no defences, no excuses, no apologies of the sinner—by no means whatever will he be moved to clear the guilty. He is God, and cannot do it. His name, his character, rise against it—forbid the acquittal of the guilty—demand that they eat the fruit of their own doings, and be filled with their own devices, and, having sown sin, reap condemnation. Is not this to shut the door of hope and seal the doom of guilty man? Is it not to roll a great stone over the mouth of his sepulchre? What hope, when the sentinel that keeps watch over his sepulchre of spiritual death and condemnation, is the Lord Jehovah in the character, “ I will by no means clear the guilty?” What hope that one of Adam's race shall rise from condemnation to acceptance, from guilt to righteous favour. This word precludes the hope, fixes the sentence gone forth against transgressors, and makes it as certain as God is, and is what he is, that sin shall not go unpunished.

Yet in this terrific sentence, this awfully certain assurance that guilt will be followed by condemnation—that guilt cannot be cleared, lie wrapt the hopes of a guilty world, and its best and surest guarantees for salvation. Draw near and contemplate this Christian paradox; come, behold with us, for a time, this Christian mystery, *The certainty that the guilty cannot be cleared—that God cannot do it—is the safeguard of redemption, the guarantee of the offered atonement.*

1. It is true, that this declaration of God's character—of the impossibility of his clearing the guilty—shuts many large and wide doors of hope. The hearts of sinners are full of devices for salvation. They have many entrance-ways to pardon and favour. There is the *placability and compassion* of God upon which they largely draw. They are conscious in themselves of being moved to relent and forgive where they have been wronged, and, judging the displeasure of God against sin to be akin to the ebullitions of their personal resentments, to be but the expression of his offended dignity, they entertain but little doubt that, when the worst comes, he will be moved to pity, and relent to softness and compassion. They have so often themselves been turned from their resentment, and yielded their anger to the pleadings of compassion, that seeing no higher principle in God's hatred of sin than in their own capricious and varying love and hatred, they conclude that, when the struggle comes, his anger will give way in the conflict, and compassion win the day. Understanding not the source of God's anger against sin in the unchanging righteousness and holiness of his nature, they see not why it should not yield to such considerations as man's necessities can urge—why, after a fair and full exhibition of itself for deterring transgressors, it should not give way, and fall from its threatened condemnation. The Divine anger is thus, in their imagination, a bugbear—well got up and wisely presented to scare and frighten transgressors, to keep them in check, and moderate their sins; but, as to any ultimate and eternal condemnation resulting from it, all is set aside by their convenient and pacifying doctrine of his easy and overwhelming compassion.

Again, there is the tempter's suggestion of the *changeableness* of God—"ye shall not surely die"—opening to many a wide door. It is not that the veracity of God is actually questioned. But then he may take back or change his word. He may so alter or modify his threatening that it will fall lightly on the transgressor. Eve, we can scarcely believe, charged God as a liar when she listened to the tempter's words, "Ye shall not surely die." She did not actually think that he spoke one thing and meant another. The tempter would scarcely have ventured to suggest in her ear the doubt of God's truthfulness. His words do not go so far. They simply insinuate, He may change. True he hath said, "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die;" and no doubt he meant what he said. Something may perhaps be done, something follow the eating the fruit of this tree—but fear not—his words are not unalterable, his threatening unchangeable. Whatever may happen, this at least ye may be sure of, ye shall not die.

It is thus universally God's threatenings are set aside. His ve-

racity is not directly questioned. Conscience will not allow men to go so far. They cannot bear their own truthfulness to be questioned; but they are conscious of having often changed their words. Many a high sounding declaration, perfectly honestly given, they know they have afterwards modified, reduced, or altogether withdrawn. Their minds are familiar with changes of purpose, both in themselves and others; and, judging of God as mutable in purpose as themselves—as honest in his threatenings, yet withal capable of change—they doubt not but that in the end the threatenings so alarming will be cancelled, or at least so altered, that sin shall not prove their ruin, or the curse of a broken law descend upon them.

These deceitful hopes are met, and the door they open for ever shut, by the one decisive passage—“and I will by no means clear the guilty”—a passage that conveys not merely in a new form the oft-repeated sentence of condemnation, but that puts in pledge Jehovah’s name—not his word alone, which we might conceive to be changed as our own, but his character, and which assures us that he is committed to condemn the sinner—not only because he has said so, but because he cannot do otherwise from his very nature, because it is simply a thing impossible for him to clear the guilty.

2. Whilst this passage shuts with so decisive a hand every false door of hope, and announces in characters of light, that guilt cannot go unpunished, it yet opens a door of hope that never can be shut, and is an immoveable anchor to every soul that has fled for refuge to the great propitiation.

I may well tremble as a guilty man when the God with whom I have to do reveals himself as a God that cannot clear the guilty—when I see that it is not his word obstinately adhered to, no, nor any personal resentment for aggrieved dignity seeking vengeance, but that, to acquit me, a sinner, is a thing impossible for him to do. Every hope then dies within me—every expectation of escape perishes. I am shut up to condemnation. Yet my very certainty of condemnation as a guilty man is my surest guarantee of salvation as a man who has fled for refuge to Christ. The very depth of my conviction, that God cannot clear the guilty, gives me a corresponding depth of conviction that he cannot punish the innocent. The very strength with which I grasp the truth—God can by no means clear the guilty—enables me to lay hold of the counterpart and corresponding truth—God can by no means punish the innocent. If I relax in my conviction of God’s certain punishment of the guilty—if I begin to waver and stagger in that conviction, or to hold it with an uncertain hand—a corresponding uncertainty is cast on my hopes in Christ: every cloud, or speck of a cloud, that passes over my

belief of the one, casts its dark and obscuring shadow on my belief of the other. My ground of confidence in both is *the righteous character of God*—my conviction of the impossibility of his doing otherwise. He can by no means clear the guilty, therefore am I assured he can by no means punish the innocent. Let this be shaken, let me begin to think that the guilty may possibly be cleared, and where is my guarantee, as a man fled to Christ, that the innocent may not also possibly be condemned? In Christ I am innocent; guilt is no longer attachable to me; my garments are washed—my soul is justified; justice, with its sword, has no claim upon me—it is satisfied; the law, with its penalties, has no demand against me; every jot and tittle of it is fulfilled. I stand before God as having magnified the law, and made it honourable. Whence this my security, whence this my strong consolation, but in the impossibility of God condemning the innocent? Christ already has been condemned for me. My guilt has not been cleared—it has not been cancelled. God can by no means clear the guilty. It has been *transferred*—it has been laid on the soul of my substitute. I see it in those marvellous words written in anticipation of his bearing the mighty load—“Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me.” I see it in the wounds, the bruises, the chastisement, the suffering unto death, which he endured: in every pang that rent his soul made sin for us. And beholding my guilt, not cleared, but punished—not remitted, but endured in its consequences—I know by the very certainty that God cannot clear the guilty, that it is no less an impossible thing for him to condemn the innocent—thus, standing at the cross, I gather joy from Christ’s sorrow, health from his wounds, healing from his stripes, out of his death the full assurance of my life eternal; and can enter into full sympathy with the Apostle’s confidence in his challenge, “Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died.”

3. We observe that the strong consolation drawn from this passage is warranted only on the supposition that, in dying, Christ died *as a true and real substitute in the room and stead of his people, and for them alone*. If Christ’s atonement was rendered for all men without exception—for the lost as well as the saved—the ground for the inference that it is impossible God can punish the innocent disappears. The doctrine of universal atonement allows that many whose sins have been atoned for, whose curse has been endured, and punishment paid, are yet lifting up their eyes in hell, being in torment. It allows that, notwithstanding their being redeemed and bought with a price, they are yet paying in their own eternal suffering the wages of their sins. Is this justice, or consistent with any scriptural idea we can form of this attribute

of God? To acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent are alike abhorrent to him. To speak of a man's sins as atoned for—of the penalty and punishment as endured—and yet of the man actually enduring both himself, suffering both, is to subvert our notions of justice, is to involve again in obscurity the character of God which the cross of Christ was designed gloriously to manifest. It is to throw back our minds into the darkness out of which the light of the cross was designed to lead them, and to involve again in clouds the justice and the judgment that are the pillars of the Almighty's throne.

We can understand, when told in the gospel, that God, in his infinite love and mercy, has provided a surety for sinners, on whom he has laid their stripes, their chastisement, their peace. We can understand how the pardon of the guilty thereby becomes consistent with the righteousness and justice of his character; yea, we can go further, and understand how his righteousness and justice are committed to pardon, pledged to pardon all for whom Christ has died, even as before they were pledged to condemn. We can understand all this; and, according as God has given us light into his Word, we take this to be the very truth therein revealed. We see it to be consistent truth—God glorifying, and fraught with strong consolation. But when told that an atonement has been offered for every man, that the guilt and sin of every man has been punished and borne away in the person of Christ, the substitute, yet that every man is not saved, that many are lost, we are perplexed, we are staggered anew in our thoughts of the Divine justice—we are lost in the view it presents to us of the Divine righteousness. What, we ask, is justice?—what is righteousness? Is it not the giving to every one his due, the due reward of his deeds? to Christ his due in suffering and wrath, when he stands the substitute of the guilty—his iniquities taking hold upon him, so that he cannot look up; and to us our due, for whom he hath suffered, and in virtue of his right, eternal release from wrath and condemnation. Why the sufferings of Christ—why the agony he endured—why made a curse for us, sin for us? Scripture replies, God cannot clear the guilty, not even when his beloved Son is the guilty one—guilty by sins not personally his own. This reply we understand,—we bow with reverence to such an answer; we are satisfied. God is just; he cannot be otherwise. But the same justice in God makes us look for a corresponding fulfilment of blessings to those for whom Christ has died. The same sense of the Divine justice that makes us acquiesce in Christ's sufferings, makes us require that those shall never suffer for whom he has suffered. *From the same justice that cannot clear the guilty, we look for the entire, perfect acquittal of the innocent.*

I know we may be told that all might be saved but for their own wilful rejection of Christ. But the present question is not regarding man's will, but God's righteousness, and whether they might or might not be saved; if all are not actually saved, whilst the price of their salvation is paid, the righteousness of God is thereby assailed—his justice impugned, and clouds and darkness again encompass his throne. Nor is it true that all might be saved but for their own wilful rejection of Christ. Alas, but a section of the world have ever heard of his blessed name, but a few spots in the circumference of the globe have been illuminated with his rays. Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people. After eighteen centuries, the sun of righteousness has not yet arisen on the nations with healing on his wings. To a Zabulon or Nephthaliim—to a Britain or to an American—has a great light sprung up, whilst other people sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. All could not have been saved, though all would. The glad sound has not gone forth to all the earth, nor its words to the end of the world.

So strongly do such considerations tell against the doctrine of universal atonement, the considerations we have drawn from the justice and righteousness of God, that they can only be met by altering the nature and character of the atonement itself, and denying that the death of Christ was a true and proper substitution for sinners—a death in the room and place of the guilty; in short, by removing to another gospel. If the real proper substitutionary character of the death of Jesus be set aside, and in its place men be taught to regard the atonement as some kind of demonstration or manifestation to enable God to forgive sin—as a work designed to make an impression on man rather than as essentially determining the procedure of God—we may then allow of a universal atonement, without a universal salvation. But what confidence such an atonement can give a sinner, or what solution of the justice and righteousness of God, we know not. It would be an atonement without giving us a guarantee that believing we are saved—an atonement without giving us an assurance that God is just—an atonement contradicting the solemn assurance of this passage, "God can by no means clear the guilty"—an atonement without laying the foundation of the corresponding truth, "God will by no means punish the innocent."

How broadly is this foundation laid in the gospel view of the atoning work of God's dear Son? There we behold one mighty in love and power, undertaking to save—God's eternal Son. We see him assume our nature, that both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified may be all of one. We see him take the position of the

guilty one beneath his Father's rod, "made sin for us." We see that rod falling in strokes of judgment and suffering upon him, "bearing the chastisements of our peace." And as we witness stroke after stroke, till the last descends, and Christ exclaims, "It is finished," we behold in each and every pang a commentary such as the universe could not otherwise give—an assurance such as needs no farther confirmation of the words, "God can by no means clear the guilty." But as we tremble at the certainty of God's condemnation of transgressors, we draw joy out of the spectacle of terror. A God all just and righteous to punish the guilty, must be a God all just and righteous to acquit the innocent. We dare tamper no more, it is true, with his threatenings against sin, when we look at the cross. It strikes us with terror at the certainty of his indignation. We see it to be an impossible thing for him to pardon the guilty—our vain hopes perish—our expectations of mercy die before that sight. But if we believe what we there behold, and welcome the Saviour there lifted up, our hopes die to rise again and live a better life, to live in the complete realization of a salvation as certainly ours, if we are believing in Christ, as that God is what he is, *For he that can by no means clear the guilty, can by no means condemn the innocent.*

Finally.—It may be thought that what the doctrine of universal redemption loses in certainty it gains in attractiveness, and that, if it give less assurance to some, it yields more hope for all. It is the favourite view of many, that by extending the death of Christ to include one and all of the human family, a wider and more effectual door is opened for the return of sinners to God, than by representing his death as exclusively for his people, and his life as laid down as a ransom for his church. Let the sinner only be taught that something has been done for him by Christ, yea, let him be assured that nothing less has been done for him by a dying, suffering Redeemer, than has been done for the saints around the throne—let him be told that in all Christ's work of expiation and suffering unto death, *he* was as much in the eye and heart of the Redeemer as any of the great multitude now clothed in white robes; and it is thought the opposition of his heart will be far more easily disarmed, and that a great and serious obstacle will be taken out of his way to the foot of the cross. Hence the zeal with which many now preach the doctrine of Christ dying for all.

Yet, after all, what does this universality amount to? Teach a man that Christ died for all, purchased and redeemed all, and it appears at first as if you gave new expansion to his hopes, conferred upon him some new and great boon. But is not this boon, he begins to reflect, common to me with souls now lost—has it not been theirs as well as

mine. What assurance, then, can it give me that I too may not be lost—that if others for whom Christ died have perished, why may not I? Some better assurance he must, therefore, have—some part and lot with Jesus, which, though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, will secure for him a loving kindness that shall never depart, and a council of peace that shall never be removed.

Such an assurance is given in the true universality of the gospel message. That message comes not with the vague general announcement, Christ has accomplished some work for all men, has come to help and assist all to take some step towards salvation. It proclaims a Christ dying, not that some, but that all things a sinner needs shall infallibly be made his—all things needful to conduct him from sin to grace, and from grace to glory, on his believing. It proclaims a Saviour not to help, but to heal; not partially to save, but wholly to crown with salvation—a Saviour, the Alpha and the Omega in salvation, the beginning and the ending, and where the Alpha, also the Omega. It knows, indeed, of nothing, it tells of nothing of Christ's, in which the sinner has any part or lot whilst unbelieving; but, sending wide its proclamation, addressing itself to all and to each of the children of men, crying aloud throughout a lost world, it assures each guilty and ruined inhabitant thereof, that if he will only obey the call—believe on the name of the Son of God—all things are his, for he is Christ's, and Christ is God's. This is the true universality of the gospel—the only universality profitable to man and honourable to God—the universality of its proclaimed blessings, so that whosoever will may partake of its waters of life freely—and the universality of its conferred blessings on those that believe; for all things are possible to them that believe.

And whilst this is the true scriptural view of the universality of the gospel, it is the only one that brings honour to Christ, or comfort to them that would commit themselves to him. We feel it would be less inconsistent with what we have ever esteemed the peculiar honour and glory of Christ, to believe that he had never redeemed one soul, than to believe that he thought so lightly of his own agony and sacrifice, as to lose sight of one soul he had redeemed, and suffer it to perish. It would cost us a less sacrifice of our thoughts of him, to believe he had never loved any unto death, than that, having loved unto death, he should yet think so little of his own love, as to suffer eternally to perish the very souls for which he had died. Where shall we find such a Christ as this? How shall we honour such a representation of his work? He is not the Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God—the wisdom of God in devising a work consistent in all its parts; and the power of God capable of executing in all its parts the work he had de-

vised. He is not the Christ who loves from the first of time, and loves to the last—the same yesterday, to-day, and for evermore—the Christ who sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied.

It is the only view also that can satisfy a soul that would commit itself to Christ. The great question with a soul in earnest is not—may I have some benefit from Christ?—but may I have such favour from him as he beareth to his own?—may I be put amongst his children, and have a place, the lowest it may be, but still a place in his kingdom, and receive at last from his own lips the welcome, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?” Does it answer these great desires of the awakened soul, to be told in the language of the doctrine of universal atonement, that Christ having died for all men must therefore have died for it? It would answer its great desires, if in Christ dying for it, were included all blessings needful for its eternal salvation. But when told that these are not included—that many are the souls lost for which Christ has died—yea, that more are the lost for which he has died than the saved—it turns from such a doctrine, dissatisfied with a death that concludes nothing, and that leaves it in as great danger of perishing as ever. Tell me, is still the inquiry of such a soul, where I will find a Saviour ample as my great necessities, complete as my soul’s wants, who undertakes to remedy all, and out of my guilty state to conduct me to pardon, purity, and glory. Such a Saviour the truly awakened soul demands; and such the Redeemer presents himself. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, *how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.*”

The inquirer, indeed, may still be distracted with the question—but do I believe? He may be in trouble regarding his own faith, even after he has seen the fulness that is in Christ—yea, the more troubled and the more fearfully tossed from the very greatness of the blessings treasured up in him. Still hold fast, thou awakened inquiring soul, or thou doubting and troubled believer, by that glorious anchor of hope—*with him God freely giveth all things.* Tossed thou mayest be for a time as to thine own faith—many questionings thou mayest have whether thou believest, but lose not sight of the glorious heritage that will be thine on believing—the all things that will come to thee through Christ. The very fulness and perfections of the blessings—the very completeness of the offered Christ—will stir up thy soul to lay hold of him, and the Spirit’s compassion to lay hold of thee, till at the feet of Jesus thou castest thyself, as the poor man in the gospel, crying, “Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

SERMON CV.

THE NATURE, ORIGIN, AND EFFECTS OF FAITH.

BY THE REV. DAVID CARMENT, A.M., ROSSKEEN.

" For we walk by faith."—2 Cor. v. 7.

MANY and keen have been the contentions among the professors of Christianity, respecting the nature, tendency, and effects of true faith. But it has been reserved for an age of unbridled licentiousness and proud independency, to contend that simple assent to the truths of Christianity is all that is required to constitute a Christian. The devils were forced to confess Christ, and their sad experience of the effects of the just anger of an offended God, fills them with trembling, while they believe that so long as he exists, they must suffer. Men, blinded by Satan and their own corrupt reasonings and depraved affections, have contended that the faith of devils is a good faith. If it be, its fruits are bad; for they remain, with all their faith, enemies to God; and those who follow them in their faith, prove by *their* fruits from whom it comes, and whither it tends. But it is evident, from the context of the passage before us, that the Apostle and his Christian brethren did not find it so easy a matter, by believing, to attain joy, and fancy that all their corruptions were subdued; for they were often in the dark, and obliged to walk by faith when they could see no such evidence, as they desired, of their being delivered from the power of sin. Yet, in this case, they had recourse to the promises of God, addressed to persons in similar situations; which is a thing which the far greater part of those who, in the present day, call themselves believers, cannot do, because they have no doubts, nor fears, any more than if they were free from all corruption. In short, it may be said of faith in the present day, as an eminent English divine said of morality, that they had preached it so long as to have at length driven it out of the nation. Thus, vain speculative men have contended so long about faith, that the faith of God's operation is seldom to be met with. Faith, however, is not to be rejected or vilified any more than morality, because wicked and unreasonable men have it not, whilst they deceive themselves with a vain

opinion that they are possessed of this precious grace ; for the Christian must and will walk by faith.

In the further prosecution of this subject, I shall

- I. Explain the nature of faith.
- II. Shew how it is begun and carried on.
- III. Point out its effects in those who possess it.

I. Faith is the belief of the truth—a reception of that truth in such a way as to influence the soul to act in conformity with it. We all allow that the belief of the truth is essential to the nature of faith ; but a question arises here, what are the truths which this faith when saving ought to receive. For without wasting your time in specifying the various kinds of faith enumerated by divines, I would just observe, that the belief of a fact impresses me very differently, according as I do or do not possess a connection with, or interest in, the fact to be believed. For instance, I hear of a rich man who dies abroad, and leaves his friend a great estate and much property. I believe this, but I feel little interest in it, though, if the person to whom it is left be my friend, I may, on his account, feel glad at the news. But the matter will be very different if I myself have a valuable property left me ; then I will be afraid of the frauds of executors, of the bankruptcy of those who hold the property, of the dangers of the seas ; and every stormy night, whilst my treasure is on the deep, my mind will be anxious and agitated. Thus those who possess only a speculative belief of the truth can talk easily, and argue lustily about faith, because they have no serious interest in the matter ; whereas those who have a real interest in it, and whose whole treasure it is, tremble because they know that they are exposed to many and multiplied dangers of various kinds.

It will surely be allowed that it is essential to, and included in, the very nature of faith, to believe in, and assent to the whole revealed will of God, and not merely the simple facts of Christ's sufferings and satisfaction. If so, I must take truths as they are, and doing so I must believe that I am an enemy of God—I must believe that I am under the curse of the law, for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them—I must believe that I have long rejected Christ, and there is a sore punishment awarded against such (Heb. x. 20) ; and, when I believe all this, will simply telling me to believe in Christ effect a cure ? You will say it is a duty to believe. I know it, but this augments my sin and sorrow, that I have so long neglected this duty, and that I still feel myself unable to practise it. They who so confidently call upon men to believe, as if by their own power they could do so, seem to forget that true faith

is the gift of God, and of the operation of his Spirit—that it never was and never can be acted by an unregenerate sinner—so that, putting faith first, they put the effect before the cause, for if their words mean anything, they mean that I am to believe, and then I shall have the Spirit, then assurance and freedom from all doubt. But I would ask those who reject all doubts and fears as inconsistent with faith—1st, How they are able to prove that their faith is anything more than delusion? A beggar may get a piece of base metal, and thinking it to be pure gold, go away rejoicing, and treasure it carefully up for the day of need; but does all this care and joy alter the nature of the base metal, or constitute it pure gold. It will only serve to aggravate his disappointment when the cheat is discovered. 2d, Whether, in this sense, the Pharisees had not faith; for they believed the Scriptures, yea their own interest in the promises, whilst he who knew the heart, calls them hypocrites? Such persons substitute, *believing that they believe*, for saving faith. They yield an historical assent to the truths of revelation, and then persuading themselves that they have faith, notwithstanding of sin, corruption, formality, neglect, lukewarmness, they persist in imagining themselves to be strong Christians, and look down with contempt upon poor doubting souls. But I will hazard an assertion which to some may seem strange, that doubts and fears are the natural concomitants of saving faith. The sun is the source of light, yet his influences are also the cause of those clouds, fogs, and exhalations which at times obscure his rays. Thus faith, which is aptly termed the eye of the soul, and which enlightens the soul, yet has the effect remotely of producing darkness, and hiding comfort from the soul. Were there, indeed, no impure soil from which these things naturally arise, faith could only produce light, joy, and comfort. Unshaken faith might suit a perfect saint, but does not agree with the state of an imperfect believer, who, the more he sees of the fulness of the Godhead in Christ, sees for his humiliation more of a hell of sin in himself, and of course must often fear that he will come short at last. But you will say that these feelings dishonour the Saviour, and injure the soul by keeping it from Christ. This is an assertion often made, but it proceeds from a total ignorance of the experience of God's people, for in no case do they cleave closer to him, never are they more emptied of self, or see more their need of Christ, than when under fears—for often then they resolve, like Esther, if they perish, they will perish at his feet. In short, if these things be not consistent with faith, how comes it that in almost every page of the Bible, the promises are expressly so framed as to suit tossed, afflicted, fearful, dark, complaining, mourning Christians, who even go so far as to refuse comfort? How come we to hear so much of the fears, and complaints, and dark-

ness of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, even the Father of the Faithful not being exempted. But have not many saints, it may be asked, attained and enjoyed uninterrupted assurance? Doubtless, not a few have attained to this, but they attained likewise to what the deluded enthusiasts of the present day have not—to great spirituality of mind, humility, and abstraction from the world. But when we see men, professing to enjoy this assurance, who yet give no evidence of spirituality of mind, or weanedness from the world, we pity the delusion which substitutes a false and selfish notion for the faith of God's elect. Here it may not be amiss briefly to show how far men may advance in religion, and yet be devoid of saving faith. 1. They may, like those mentioned 2 Peter ii. 20, not only escape the pollutions that are in the world, but they may be decent and grave in their conduct and deportment, and seemingly desirous of knowing more and more of the will of God, as exhibited in the case of the young ruler mentioned Matt. xix. 20. 2. They may come to follow Christ apparently for a time, like those mentioned John vi. 66, who, when they heard doctrines which they neither understood nor relished, went back and walked no more with him. 3. Yea, men may be brought to have a vivid and terrible view of sin and its consequences, as Belshazzar, Felix, Cain, Judas, and yet, after all, be devoid of saving faith. 4. They may be influenced by many serious religious principles—may hear with constancy and delight—may be stirred up to devotion and the perusal of good books—may fast, pray, communicate, and still be without faith. (Isaiah lviii. 2; Ezekiel xxxiii. 31.) 5. Men may believe in, and zealously contend for, all the truths of the Gospel, and yet be wholly destitute of grace. If we look around on the professing world, we shall receive ample and awful proof of this fact. 6. Men may strive and labour to come to Christ, disclaiming every other hope, and yet, under all this humility, self be at the bottom. They are trying to make themselves good, in order that they may be fitted for Christ. Lastly, men may be filled with joy, under the influence of high and warm affections, like the stony-ground hearers, and those who cried "Hosanna," and after all be destitute of faith. In short, there is no one experience of the people of God but what Satan will mimic, hypocrisy imitate, and pride build upon.

But we come now more immediately to the consideration of what faith positively is. We shall give you a definition of faith, not in words of human invention, which have led many astray, but in words indited by the Spirit of God. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Here we have a brief, but appropriate and emphatic description of what faith is. It is the substance of things

hoped for ; it gives them a real subsistence in the soul. We not only believe the promises, but we realize, feel, enjoy them ; we are practically influenced by them as truly as we are by sensible objects. As in the first creation, though the Spirit of God moved upon the waters, nothing could be seen, until God said, " Let there be light ;" so in the new creation, when the Spirit begins to operate on the mighty mass of corruption in the human soul, until God sheds into the heart the light of his glorious Gospel, nothing can be seen or traced ; but, by means of this light, the convert is enabled to discern spiritual things, formerly hid, and obtains by faith a convincing evidence of their existence, though unseen by the bodily eye. Faith, then, in the spiritual life, is what the senses are in the natural life, and thus they are contrasted in the words of our text—" For we walk by faith, not by sight." When a person truly believes, the Gospel is written on the heart, and engraven upon the mind, so as to become the moving principle of his actions and affections. It is thus that he is enabled to walk by faith, and to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as offered in the Gospel. Some divines of great eminence have held that assurance is essential to the nature of saving faith ; but for this we have no warrant in Scripture, and the whole current of experience is against it. It is true that it is a blessed attainment ; many have enjoyed it—all are commanded to seek after it, as that which honours God, and which, in a peculiar manner, enables the soul to walk with ease and delight in the path of duty. But I must here observe, that the assurance which these divines have contended for, is far different from that confident presumption which puts an act of the mind in the place of the Spirit of God, and supposes that a mere persuasion of the truth of the Gospel is all that is necessary to constitute and uphold Christian assurance. There are only two ways by which we can attain the assurance of faith, or satisfactory, unclouded, scriptural evidence of our being possessed of saving faith—1. By the witness of the Spirit, spoken of Rom. viii. 16 ; 2. By examining our experiences, and being enabled to trace the works and fruit of the Spirit. It may be said that, as perfect love casts out fear, so faith, from the very meaning of the word, must exclude doubting. We know, however, that this is not the case ; and that, holding this doctrine, we behoved to exclude thousands of Christians, who afford otherwise the most genuine evidence that they are the real children of God. But this state of matters may be easily accounted for, when we reflect that the capacity of man's nature to apprehend various objects is so confined, and the extent of his spiritual vision so limited, that he cannot trace and arrange the objects of belief as he ought, nor adapt and apply the truth as his situation may seem to demand ; so that, by confining his view to

a part instead of the whole, he is left to doubt his interest in Christ and the promises, because he sees the extent of his sin, and the depth of his depravity. Now, this state of mind is generally termed unbelief, but I think very improperly in the generally-received acceptation of that word. It is true, it is so used Mark ix. 24, but to denote weak faith, and not damning unbelief, as is clear from the connection—"Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief"—that is, help me to believe those truths which I do not yet fully understand, and have not yet received. The same cause which operates to depress the Christian, tends to deceive, with proud presumptuous hopes, the hypocrite; for he again overlooks all his corruption and formality, and fastens on the bare promises as the ground of his confidence. There is a twofold walk of faith, according to the state the believer is in. 1. When he feels the gracious presence of God, and his candle shines upon his head—then it is easy for the believer to walk in the paths of righteousness, yet still carefully, for we are proud, presumptuous creatures, and ready to be exalted above measure, so that we often need, like Paul, a thorn in the flesh to keep us humble, otherwise we are apt to suffer grievous falls—lamentable instances of which the history of the saints furnishes us with—so that, though this be the most comfortable, it is not the safest walk. "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." 2. When in darkness as to his state. Who will say that Job, Asaph, Heman, and even Thomas, did not walk by faith, though in much darkness? Surely they did, for they had then no pleasing feeling, no confidence in past experience—then Christ, and Christ alone, with his unconditional promises, was their stay and support.

Before concluding this head of discourse, we would just observe, in addition to what has been already said of the nature of faith, that it is called in Scripture a lively faith, effectual faith, faith unfeigned, the faith of God's elect. Now, surely all these terms—if language has a meaning—imply that there is a dead faith, a faith that is not effectual to salvation, a feigned faith, a faith which is different from that possessed by those who are not God's elect people. Faith is also expressed in Scripture by such metaphors as these—embracing Christ, looking to him, coming to him, feeding upon him, leaning upon him, taking shelter under him. All these significant figures, with many more which might be mentioned, must surely mean something greatly more than mere assent to, or bare belief of, the truth. It would be wise in many who think that they have faith, to enquire whether they do indeed experimentally understand what these expressions mean. True believers do understand them, and they bless God for the sweet experience he has given them of their import.

II. We come now to consider how faith is begun and carried on in the soul. Faith is the gift of God, and is wrought in the heart by his holy Spirit. As our Shorter Catechism well expresses it, "The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling." The Spirit is the agent, the Gospel is the mean, and faith is the fruit. It is impossible for a sinner to do anything spiritually good till the Spirit of God breathe upon him. Of this great and momentous truth, we have a striking illustration in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, where though, in consequence of the prophet's address to them, the sinews and flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above, yet still they were without life or motion until the wind breathed upon them. Thus, however far in outward appearance and likeness to life a sinner may attain under the means of grace, still he can perform no saving act, he is not alive, till the Spirit breathes into him the breath of spiritual life. The Spirit begins his work in the soul by bringing the sinner to see the evil of sin, and the dangerous estate he is in by nature—things formerly hidden to him. See what is said of the converts under Peter's sermon. They were pricked in their hearts, and, filled with terror, exclaimed, "What must we do?" Then it was that the promise was exhibited, and that they believed and were baptized. The Philippian jailer trembled, and was in great agitation of mind, even after he knew that his prisoners were safe, and all his enquiry was, "What must I do to be saved?" Yea, Paul himself was evidently under great distress of mind, until he was visited by Ananias. All these were first brought to see the guilt and danger of their state by nature. This must be seen and felt before the sinner will seek or prize Christ. It is worthy of remark here, that, in pronouncing the curses and blessings under the law, we find it enjoined expressly that all the people should say "Amen" to the curses, whilst this is not expressly mentioned in regard to the blessings. What is the reason of this difference? It is evident that nothing but a principle of obedience could induce man to assent to the curses—the blessings he would naturally readily receive. So men would willingly persuade themselves, that they have a right to the blessings of the new covenant, but nothing but a day of power will bring them to assent to the curses of the law, as that which they are deservedly under. When the sinner is effectually called, by whatever mean, hearing, reading, conversation, affliction, or remarkable dispensations of Providence, what he first feels is a sense of sin and wrath—a sense of unworthiness and guilt. The curses of the law he says "Amen" to. "I deserve them all, and they are my portion." Yet, behold, like Paul, though still blind to the way of salvation, he prays, he pleads, he confesses, he

mourns, he cries, but as yet with a legal spirit, "What must I do to be saved?" He has no faith but in the threatenings of the law. He believes the record that God is just and holy, but as yet has no view, or only a faint view, of his mercy in Christ. But, in due time, Christ is revealed, though at first it may be dimly, to the seeking soul. The spirit of bondage gives place to the spirit of adoption. And now the awakened soul, though still in distress, and though destitute of that clear view of Christ which it pants after, is no longer devoid of faith. It has the faith of adherence. It cleaves to Christ, and will not let him go—it prizes him above all things—thirsts and hungers for him. Faith, therefore, exists in that soul, though it may be like a grain of mustard seed—hid in the earth, lying under, and surrounded by a load of corruptions and temptations. It is there, and evidences itself to be a living faith, by its cries and breathings, as the new-born infant indicates life, though unable to move or help itself. Thus the beginnings of faith are small, and often not easily discerned even by him who is the subject of the marvellous change. The work, then, being thus begun by the Holy Spirit, must be carried on and completed by the same glorious agent. And so it is; he makes the path of his people to be like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But the life of faith in the Christian's soul is not one of uniform comfort or confidence. Various reasons may be assigned which operate to produce this effect, independent of sore temptations, trials, and crosses. Man is an erring, fallible creature; he is mutable and inconstant, and, of course, liable to decay in grace—to be guilty of many actual transgressions—to grieve the Spirit. In this case, God never intended that he should retain his assurance and sin at the same time; and, as Newton says, the assurance which sin will not damp is not worthy of the name. Yet, after all his changes and fluctuations, like the river in its course, which, various as its windings may be, still advances to the sea, so he still advances heavenward; and, as the river increases in its course to the ocean, though often by imperceptible degrees, and though at times it may appear almost dried up, yet, when the rain falls, resumes its former volume—so the Christian, as he advances in his course, increases in faith and steadfastness, abounding more and more in the work of the Lord. The outward means whereby the work of faith in the soul is carried on are so well known, that they need scarcely be repeated here. Reading, Christian conference, but especially, the word, sacraments, and prayer, these are the outward and ordinary means which ought to be used. But there are other means, hidden from the world, and sometimes from the soul itself for a time, by which faith is made to grow; for, though afflictions, losses, trials, prove poison to the worldling, yet,

from these things, the Christian, by the blessing of God, extracts honey to feed and refresh his fainting, weary soul. Thus, by various means, the believer's faith is carried on and grows, and that though he should live and die without assurance, yea, full of fears. Its increasing fruits prove this to be the case ; for it is by these that the reality and strength of faith are manifested.

III. We proceed now briefly to point out the fruits and effects of faith. In the first place, then, it is said that faith worketh by love. (Gal. v. 6.) Love is the source of every duty of the Christian life, and without it we are nothing—we will do nothing—we can do nothing. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Now, it is evident that faith must work by love, if we consider the great object of faith, even Christ, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and who is to be loved, not only for what he has done for us, but for what he is in himself. It is easy for us, however, to deceive ourselves in speculatively contemplating the glories of the Redeemer's character, and to persuade ourselves that we possess love to him ; but, in order to obviate the danger of self-deceit, he himself has told us in what manner we are to prove our love to him to be genuine. "Ye are my friends," says he, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John xv. 8.) Now, the commandment is to love God and our neighbour. Love to God will show itself by our endeavouring daily to glorify him in our bodies and our spirits, which are his ; and love to our neighbour, by our labouring for his spiritual and temporal good. It is, indeed, impossible to suppose that true faith can subsist in any soul without this work of love. Can we imagine that he who has seen himself a condemned sinner, deservedly exposed to the wrath and curse of God, and who has been delivered out of this dreadful state, and found rest in and by a Saviour, can ever cease to love this Saviour, or, loving him, can cease to delight in doing his will, and thus manifesting his gratitude for the great deliverance wrought out for him ? It is true, indeed, that the weak Christian may be apt to think that he is destitute of this love ; but if he reflects on what he was, and how he felt and acted before he became a believer, and contrasts that with the manner in which he now feels and acts, he will find, that, though still surrounded by corruption, this Christian grace does exist in his soul.

2. Where there is true faith, it purifies the heart. The first view given to the soul in conversion is a view of its own sinfulness. Of course, that soul will strive with God in prayer, that his Spirit may be given to cleanse and purify it. It will be its earnest desire to be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, to be enabled to hate all sin,

and to love and follow holiness. Those who believe that Christ has suffered and died for them, must desire to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Corruption, no doubt, may sometimes prevail, and faith be shaken, but still it is true in the main, that sin no longer has dominion over them.

3. Where there is true faith, it overcomes the world. (1 John v. 4.) Great is the influence of the world over the children of men, whilst in a natural state. It is their chief good, yea, their God. They love it—they fear it—they cling to it. By its maxims and opinions they regulate their lives, even while professing to believe the Gospel. But faith overcomes the world, and enables the Christian to live above it, using it, but not abusing it. The believer sees that Christ gave himself for this very end, to redeem us from the world. (Gal. i. 4.) He remembers that, in order to be Christ's disciple, he must take up his cross, and leave all and follow him. He now possesses desires which the world cannot satisfy, and therefore he looks above and beyond it. His eyes behold the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off, so that he can see neither beauty nor permanency in this present evil world. These, then, are those heavenly fruits, which, in whatever soul they exist, prove its faith to be genuine.

Do you possess this precious faith? Remember that it will profit you nothing to say you have faith, unless it be a faith of the operation of God—a faith not speculative, but practical. Therefore, "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. xiii. 5.)

SERMON CVI.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST THE SECURITY OF THE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. ALEX. GENTLE, ALVES.

"Because I live, ye shall live also."—JOHN xiv. 19.

JESUS was at this time speaking to his disciples concerning the manner of his departing from them ; and seeing how their hearts were made sad by what they had heard, he gives them such words of comfort as were suited to uphold them during the trial of their faith that was at hand. The whole discourse relates to his sufferings then near at hand, and the consolations offered relate to the glory that should follow. He speaks of his death as if it were past, and therefore of the glory that should follow, as if it were already begun ; so that he, as it were, in the words of our text, says, " I am about to suffer and to be removed from this world, but I shall soon revive and live again, and being alive shall live for ever more ; therefore be not dismayed nor confounded at all the work of death ye shall see in me ; for I shall live, and because I live ye shall live also." We need hardly say, that the words spoken to the disciples at that time are addressed to the whole Church, and are applicable at all times as words of comfort to those who believe the truth as it is in Christ. Thus, the words given at first for the special comfort of the first disciples, are full of comfort to the disciples of Jesus now. Yea, they are fitted to impart even greater joy and consolation, inasmuch as the meaning of the words is now better understood, being interpreted by the events both of the dying and of the rising again of the Lord.

The comforting truths may be brought before our view by considering,

I. The words of the Lord, " I live."

II. The words, " Ye shall live also."

III. The word " because," as indicating the connection between those two things, viz., the life of the Lord himself, and the life of all his disciples.

I. The words, " I live." As uttered by the Lord Jesus, these words

have an extensive signification. To say, "I live," belonged to him as God, as the Son of God, "being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person"—(Heb. i. 3)—"who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." (Phil. ii. 6.)

We know that when the occasion called for it, he claimed nothing less as belonging to him than the life which is without beginning of days and without end of years. For when the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, saying, "thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham. Jesus said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The meaning of which is established by the declaration of the divine nature and eternal pre-existence of the Word, who "was in the beginning," and "was with God," and "was God," and "was in the beginning with God." "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." If that divine life of the eternal Son of God can be made in any manner the foundation of the hope of life for our souls, what may not be built on such a foundation—what limits can be placed to the benefits that shall flow from such a source? Yet that is not all. The words, "I live," were uttered by the man Christ Jesus. It belonged to him as son of man to say, "I live." He never refused to own that incomprehensible union of the divine and human natures in his person, in virtue of which it came to be said of him—(2 Cor. viii. 9)—"that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"—rich in the glories of the Son of God, to whom the Father saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom"—yet, poor also as the Son of man, "having taken on him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham"—poor as made of a woman, made under the law, and of no reputation, taking on him the form of a servant, "being made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." He accordingly owns this. And in most places he is recorded as speaking of himself as the "Son of man." And he plainly here speaks of himself in this sense, as living and to live for ever, for the words were spoken in the near prospect of his tasting death. And as the hour drew nearer, his words savour more and more of tender compassion for his mourning disciples, and of assurances that comfort should come to them. "Yet a little while and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to my Father." As if he had said, "though I die I shall live again; though this body shall be nailed to the cross and shall go down to the grave, yet in the body will I visit you." These sayings the disciples could by no means comprehend when first they were uttered.

Yet in a few days their meaning was explained by the events that came to pass. The Saviour rose and spake peace to them. He assured them of his protection. He gave them commission to preach. In their sight he ascended into heaven as the Prince of life—possessing not the divine nature alone, but the human also, and he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, not only as the Son of God, but also as the Son of Man. Even that same soul which in the Garden of Gethsemane had been exceeding sorrowful, was filled with joy in the reward of his travail; and that same body that had been marred with wounds was raised up a glorious body—was received into the everlasting gates, when they were lifted up that the King of glory might enter in. There he has since appeared in the presence of God for his people, and there will he come to lift up the redeemed from among men unto honours untold. He will make them when finally gathered to be, for ought we know, the objects on which the angels of heaven shall look with intense delight; for they shall trace the course of their coming unto glory in their souls sanctified from all sin, and in their bodies too, fashioned in the likeness of his glorious body, from which neither He nor they shall be transformed to all eternity.

II. The words “ye shall live also,” as applicable to all the disciples of Jesus, contain the comfort designed to be brought out of the declaration of the Lord concerning his own life. Ye shall live *also*. His living is the measure of their living. *I live, ye shall live*. The manner of his living is the manner of theirs—ye shall live “*also*”—in like manner, in like place, in like glory. “As the Son of Man shall live in glory, in acceptance with God, in blessedness, in holiness, so shall ye. As I the Son of God, shall live for ever in that glory and blessedness, so shall ye live for ever in yours. As this my body shall revive from the power of the grave, so shall your body also revive. As I ascend unto my Father, so shall ye ascend to my Father and your Father. As I die unto sin once, and thenceforth live unto God, so ye, believing in me, are made free from sin that ye might live unto God. As I sanctify myself, so shall ye be sanctified, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. As I in soul and body kindred to yours shall dwell for ever in the heavenly glory, so shall ye in soul and body be made fit to dwell with me where I am; for ever like unto me, and for ever with me.”

Accustomed as we are to the hearing of it as a truth that the believer *lives through Christ*, and that *he is his life*, we are not moved by the statement to any feeling of wonder. Yet if we give heed to the meaning of the Scripture language, as to the place and rank of the servants and disciples of Jesus, we shall find great occasion to wonder that such

things are spoken. "Beloved," says one to his fellow disciples, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "Glory, and honour, and immortality" is the portion reserved for them; "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Unspeakable, truly! for what attempt can be made to set forth in words what that manner of life may be whereof these are parts "to walk with him in white, to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and to drink of the rivers of pleasures that are at his right hand?" When we think of the greatness of the promise, and try to take it to ourselves, then it is we feel the need of some strong assurance to enable us to take hold of it. Its beginnings here in this present time are small—*faith*, and *repentance*, and *patience*, and *perseverance*, and *self-denying service*, and *growth in holiness*; and, though these might be taken to be the beginnings, there is often felt by God's people great anxiety as to such beginnings ever reaching a termination so glorious as a life in the likeness of the glory of the Lord. That which is here added as confirmation of the promise is, therefore, of great value, viz., the inseparable connection between the life of Christ Jesus and the life of his disciples.

III. There is an inseparable connection between the life of Christ Jesus and the life of his disciples. It is here expressed in the word "*because*." We have not as yet adverted particularly to this word—not that it is unimportant, for, as it stands in this clause, it is of great importance to the comforting power of the Lord's promise. Had he said, *I live, and ye shall live also*, there would have been much consolation and much ground of hope. There is, however, far more of both conveyed by the words, "*because I live, ye shall live also*." For therein the life of the disciple is set forth as included or involved in the life of the Lord. "The soul of the disciple is truly, as it were, bound in the bundle of life with the Lord his God." (1 Sam. xxv. 29.)

The force of the expression, as here used, seems to be twofold.

1st, Christ's living is an effectual security of the life of his disciples. It cannot fail to make sure their life, and all that pertains to it. If the life of the soul depended on something within itself—something of its own—how often would the cause of its failure arise and prevail? What grace in our souls is not ready to fade and die? Faith grows weak—hope languishes—love waxes cold. The heart is ready to grow weary in well-doing. Temptations, once overcome, return, and are like mighty enemies that are too strong for us. Some, looking to such things in themselves, have been tempted to think and speak as if they would give

up all hope, as if, on account of these things, they concluded they should be cut off. They thus speak as if their own interest were all that is concerned in their being saved from wrath. They forget, that, if they be Christ's, other interests besides theirs are concerned in their being saved; viz., the glory of God the Father, who from everlasting gave unto Christ his people to be saved by him, and the upholding of the everlasting covenant, and the fulfilling of the promise to the Son, "that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand—that he should see of the travail of the reward of his soul, and be satisfied." These high ends shall not fail of being accomplished. Therefore, to the desponding thoughts that arise at times in the disciple's mind because of his own unworthiness of divine favour, the answer of this Scripture is, "Not for any thing found in thee, even when thy graces are in liveliest exercise, dost thou receive gifts from God, but because the perishing of a soul given unto the Saviour would be the diminishing of some portion of the glory of that life which he liveth unto God for his people's sake." Herein is the blessedness of union between the Head and the living members of the mystical body. So likewise the gift of the Spirit obtained by Christ is a security for the life of his disciple. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." (John xvi. 7.) What can come, therefore, to the disciple in the contest with sin, from which that mighty helper is not ready to deliver him? He cannot be where his wants are not seen—he cannot cry where he will not be heard—and, unworthy as he may be, and may feel himself to be, of such communications of heavenly power, he has, notwithstanding, this ground of confidence, "The Lord has gone away for the very purpose that the Spirit might come." It were the diminishing of the glory of Jesus, that, when asked, the Spirit should be withheld. Besides, Christ ever liveth to make intercession—appearing in the presence of God for his people. So that no want can arise for which they may not find a supply—no grief for which they may not find consolation—and no temptation or enemy from which they may not find deliverance; for he maketh intercession at the right hand of power: and, therefore, the benefits received by the saints do not only minister to *their good*, but also *shew forth the glorious fulness which dwelleth in the Son*, according to the Father's good pleasure. Thus, "*because I live, ye shall live also*," is a word of assurance to the confirming of the soul of the believer in times of doubting, or of striving, or of fear and perplexity. How great the number and the variety of such seasons is best known to those who are most conversant with the application of Gospel truth to the afflicted, the tempted, the dying, and best known to those who are most conversant in

the work of judging and examining their own selves. Ah! my friends, it is one thing to listen with attention, and perhaps with some degree of pleasure, to the statement of Scripture truths, compared together as to their agreement and fitness as parts of one system of doctrine—such as the freeness of grace suited to the doctrine of the sinner's helplessness—the sufferings of the Lamb of God as suited to the Divine holiness condemning sin—and the power of the Spirit as suited to the moral depravity of our fallen nature. It is another thing to take hold by faith of the finished work of Christ as a firm ground for our own standing in the presence of the Holy One, and to see in the sufferings of Jesus something to meet and to answer each accusation which the law maketh against our own iniquities, and to believe that the Spirit is sufficient to work in us a final victory over those inward spiritual enemies with which we may have long been striving. And there are times when, in regard to each of these, the soul would sink down as under a hopeless task, were there not something out of ourselves, and independent of ourselves, on which to fall back. Let all, then, who feel this be persuaded to take the benefit of this gracious assurance given here—viz., the inseparable connection between the life of Christ and the life of each believer—pleading it before God, and urging it on their own souls, let them learn to say in answer to each discouraging suggestion, “Why art thou cast down O my soul? what should disquiet thee concerning thy final acceptance, and thy final victory over all thy sins whilst thou waitest on him? This is his word unto thee, ‘because I live thou shalt live also.’ Fear not that thou shalt perish or fail of the glorious inheritance; for, then, there should fail not *thy life only* but (what is impossible) there should fail some what of his!”

2d, Christ living is the *only* security of the life of the soul—the only ground of the sinner's peace with God, and admission into the heavenly state. The mind that is blinded by sin and unbelief of the divine word, dreams of many saviours—that is, of many ways of making peace with an offended God. One takes comfort in the vague impression of divine mercy; another excuses himself by his natural inability to keep from sin; another boasts of his being free from the flagrant transgressions of the openly wicked; another lays stress on the amendment he has made, from what he was in former days; and another builds up hope on the multitude of his deeds of charity and of help to the needy; and, even in the absence of all these things, another is confident of his safety, on the ground of the rigid observance of outward religious duties and services. Yet these are false foundations: they will deceive all who trust in them; for the word will be found true of all that enter into the heavenly rest, that they came unto it by the blood of the Lamb, and were accepted *in the beloved*. They will give all the glory of their salvation

unto God and unto the Lamb that was slain, and that washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and their Father. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Thus, on the one hand, the connection between the life of Christ and that of his disciples, is a strong encouragement to them who believe in him, that they shall be made perfect. So, on the other hand, that connection is a powerful warning to those who do not believe on him. They put not their trust there where alone it ought to be. They do not come to him that they may have life—and shall they then find it? They do not build upon the rock but upon the sand—and what shall be their portion in the day when the floods come? Shall they not be carried away?

"Because I live ye shall live also"—we must therefore press, finally, as in way of an earnest exhortation to such as have allowed themselves to hope for life and blessedness on any other ground. We beseech them to listen to this word of the Lord as against their present false hopes. It tells them that they are seeking to enter in by some other way than by the door of the sheep-fold. And it seems to say to them, why will ye seek to enter in by another way, when this way is so open and so sure? Why will ye refuse to build your house upon such a rock immovable, as this blessed promise sets before you, on which, if ye build, your safety, and peace, and blessedness, are involved in one interest with the incorruptible glory of the Godhead!

May God grant unto his saints to estimate aright the strong consolations provided for them, that they may stand fast—that they may abound in prayer—that they may persevere unto the end, having the Lord's strength perfected in their weakness! May God grant unto such as have been choosing to walk in the light of their own fire, and in the sparks of their own kindling, to be awakened to a sense of their folly and their danger; and, being led to contrast the shifting sand of their vain hopes with the Rock of the true Christian's safety, may they hasten to make their escape, and to lay hold on Jesus as the Rock of their salvation! AMEN.

SERMON CVII.

JESUS STANDING AT THE DOOR.

BY THE REV. THOMAS WILSON, FRIOCKHEIM.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—Rev. iii. 20.

THE Apostle John was suffering banishment in the Isle of Patmos for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. During this period of his history, the glorified Redeemer appeared to him, and revealed to him the things which are written in this book. Amongst these things there are seven epistles, addressed to the seven Churches of Asia. The words of the text constitute part of the epistle which was addressed to the Church of Laodicea. They are not limited, however, in their application to the members of that church. They are applicable to all to whom the blessed gospel is sent—to all who enjoy the means of grace and of salvation, and are addressed especially to those who have not yet embraced Jesus the Saviour by faith. In reference to all such, this gracious Saviour himself is saying—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

In the previous part of this epistle, Christ sets himself forth as standing in the market-place, inviting poor perishing sinners to come and buy of him the goods which he had to sell, and which would constitute in reality all that their souls required in order to their well-being—their complete and eternal felicity. "I counsel thee," says he, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." The unbelieving and impenitent sinner slights the invitations and the offers of the Saviour in the market-place. He goes home, as it were, to his dwelling-place, poor, and destitute, and perishing as ever, though still unwilling to allow that this is his condition; yea, still saying, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." He shuts the door of his house, and bars it, and retires to rest, having left the Saviour in the market-

place to dispose of his goods to such as may choose to buy them. But the Saviour is unwilling that the sinner should persevere in slighting his own mercies—that he should rest in his present sad and affecting condition—that he should for ever perish in his sins. And so the words of the text lead us to regard him as having, in compassion, in mercy, and in love, followed the sinner home to his dwelling-place, and as there, standing at his door, fast shut against him, and at the dead hour of the night knocking for admission, that he may bestow upon him the blessings which he has to dispense, even his great salvation. “Behold,” Jesus is saying, “I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.”

It is the Lord Jesus, brethren, who speaks in these words. The heart of the sinner is the habitation at which he knocks for admission. Upon such as give him admission, as cordially embrace him by faith, he bestows the blessings of his purchase—the blessings of salvation. Yea, he gives them to enjoy the most close and intimate communion and fellowship with him. All this is intimated by his coming in and supping with them, and they with him. Such is substantially the meaning and import of the words of the text. And they present to our view a very tender and affecting picture of the Saviour’s condescension and love. He seeks to be the great object of the faith, the trust, the confidence, and the affection of the sinful children of men. This is the admission into their hearts for which he knocks. And on his obtaining this admission, he supplies all the wants of the soul, and blesses it with his everlasting salvation.

But let us enter upon a somewhat more particular consideration of the words before us.

I. And, *first*, we would advert to the dignity of the person who knocks at the door of the sinner’s heart—who seeks to become the sinner’s guest.

It is no poor wayfaring man, who has lost his road in the darkness of the night, that comes to the door of the sinner asking for admission. It is one greater and mightier by far than the sons of even the mightiest upon earth. It is the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God. It is even He who has upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” It is he who once lived upon this earth, but who now reigns in glory—the Head of all principality and power—the Head over all things to his Church. It is he who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and who, because he did so, hath been highly exalted by God, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and hath had a name given

to him that is above every name—that at his name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. This, sinner, is the person who knocks at thy door, and seeks admission into thy house. Wouldest thou give a welcome reception to some fellow-worm of the dust, who happened to occupy some station in this world superior to thine own, were he to knock at thy door and ask admission into thy house?—wouldest thou regard thyself as honoured by his call, and by his condescending to become thy friendly guest?—and wilt thou keep thy door fast shut, barred and bolted, against this more than royal visitor, against this Divine visitor, who is at the same time the great, the real, the true, the only real and true friend of sinners?

II. But the door is shut; and this is the *next* point to which we would advert. When the Lord Jesus comes seeking admission into the sinner's heart, he finds it fast shut against him. It is fastened by many and strong bars and bolts: it is barred by ignorance of spiritual things—it is barred by thoughtlessness and inconsideration in regard to the interests of the soul—it is barred by the love of the world and the things of the world—it is barred by the love of sin—it is barred by prejudice—it is barred by pride—it is barred by passion—it is barred by a spirit of self-righteousness—it is barred by hatred of God—it is barred by hatred of holiness. The heart of man is naturally destitute of all goodness. Though firmly closed against the Saviour, it has all along been open to the world and to sin. They have never needed to stand at the door and knock. It is, consequently, filled with impure thoughts, and desires, and affections, propensities, and passions. It is like a cage of unclean birds. Jesus comes to it as such, and knocks for admission. On finding admission, he would sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. He would dislodge all its impure occupants, and make it the temple of the Holy Ghost. He would take up his own abode in it, make it his own residence, and adorn it with all the riches of his grace. But, alas! in how many instances is it, that its possessor is quite satisfied with it, in its present state, and that he will not be at the trouble of rising to admit the blessed Jesus with his great salvation, though He knock long for admission! Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. The door is kept fast under all its bars and bolts. And the blessed Jesus, finding no admission there, has at length in many, many instances, to take his departure.

III. But observe, *thirdly*, that it is not all at once that Jesus takes his

departure. Having come to the sinner, and found his heart fast shut against him, he does not straightway leave him. No; he stands—he stands waiting for admission, as if he could not make a better of it—knocking as earnestly as if it were wholly his own advantage that he was seeking, and not the advantage of the sinner. And yet it is not his own advantage that he is seeking. Why, he is infinitely glorious and blessed in himself. He is the object of the adoration and of the praise of angel and of archangel. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels minister unto him. And what advantage, then, could he derive from a poor sinner—a poor worm of the dust? It is unspeakable condescension that He should sit upon a throne of grace, and suffer, yea, invite sinners to come to him; but more wonderful than even this is the exhibition here made of his disinterested love. He comes, as it were, to the sinner's door, and stands asking admission into his house. Sometimes he stands waiting long for admission—waiting until his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. And is it not the case that, after all, he has often to go away without obtaining admission? What unutterable condescension, and compassion, and kindness, and love, does not the blessed Jesus exhibit in this towards the poor, perishing sinners of mankind! Where is any thing like this to be found in the conduct of man towards his fellow man? Truly, God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, nor his ways as man's ways; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so are God's thoughts above man's thoughts, and God's ways above man's ways.

How, dear brethren, is it that you are acting towards this Divine visitor? Have you thrown the doors of your hearts wide open to receive him? Mark the description which the Psalmist gives of his welcome into the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city, after he had left this world:—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." And what a cordial and joyous welcome ought you not to give him into your hearts? But, ah! it may be, that, with numbers of you, the very reverse of this has been the case. You have kept the doors and gates of your hearts fast shut against him. You have allowed him to stand without for years; aye, some of you, it may be, for many, many years, until you have become old men and women. And still he is without. Oh! let it be so no longer with any of you, whether you be young or old. Let the blessed Jesus stand no longer without. Throw your hearts wide open for his admission. Make him the great object of your faith, your trust, and your confidence. Let him become the beloved of your souls, and all will yet be well. Let it be so even now, without any

farther delay. While Jesus is still standing at your door, admit him ; for he will not stand always. To-morrow, he may be away, and you will be undone for eternity. This is the day of your merciful visitation ; but by to-morrow the things that belong to your everlasting peace may be for ever hid from your eyes.

IV. But notice now, *fourthly*, the action of Jesus while he stands at the door of the sinner. He *knocks*. And here I would have you to notice particularly, that Jesus is represented as not forcing his way into the heart of a sinner against the sinner's will—as not coming in until the sinner has heard his voice and opened the door. The reception of Christ is the sinner's own act ; faith in Christ is the work of the sinner's soul. And yet the testimony of all Scripture is, that we cannot of ourselves, or by our own power, open our hearts to the admission of the blessed Saviour. " Faith is the gift of God." No power of our own, no persuasion of man, no ordinances of God, can make us believe in Christ. It is only the power of Christ himself—of that very Saviour who is standing at the door—it is only his power, exerted by the Holy Spirit, that can incline our hearts to hear his voice and obey his call. He makes us " willing in the day of his power." He " works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." But it is our *will* on which he operates, so that we may, as it were, with our own hands unlock the door, cast away all our prejudices against the gospel, and renounce all confidence in our own righteousness. And in order to our doing so, Christ employs means which are suited to change our wills, and which, by his blessing on them, will not indeed force open the door in spite of all the resistance of the soul, but will overcome that resistance by supplanting it with willingness and submission. For the blessed Jesus draws his people " with bands of love and the cords of a man." That is to say, he uses all means that are in their own nature fitted to awaken the sinner, and to prevail upon him to open the door, and give him admission. He knocks by proclaiming in the sinner's ears the sad and desperate condition into which he has fallen—that the curse of God is upon him—that he is a child of wrath and an heir of hell. He knocks by proclaiming His own most gracious and blessed work—by announcing that he hath endured the wrath and borne the curse of God—that he hath, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself unto God, and by his own blood hath entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for as many of the sinful children of men as shall open the door of their hearts and give him admission. He knocks by tender and pressing invitations, by earnest entreaties, by affectionate expostulations, by rich and precious promises. Oh, how often does he knock by these precious and heart-affecting words of the prophet ! " Ho, every one that

thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." He knocks by the faithful warnings which he addresses to such as set at nought his invitations and his offers. He knocks by the awful threatenings which his word contains against all who persevere in rejecting him and his so great salvation. He knocks by the dictates of natural conscience. The conscience of the sinner is often far from being at ease—far from being satisfied with the course which he is pursuing. And Jesus knocks for admission into his heart by its accusations and criminations. He knocks again by the strivings and convictions of his holy Spirit. How often does the Spirit strive to break open the sinner's heart, that Jesus may obtain an entrance, until he be grieved and vexed ! Ah ! does he not often strive until he is provoked to withdraw altogether, leaving the sinner to the hardness of his own heart, leaving him to perish in his infatuation ? He knocks loudly, again, at the hearts of many when seasons of high communion come round—on solemn sacramental occasions. Oh, his love to sinners—his matchless love to sinners—is then most strikingly brought before our view. And how powerfully does it plead with sinners to open their hearts and give him admission ! He knocks yet farther, by the dispensations of Providence, at the heart of the sinner for admission. Affliction is sent—personal or family affliction. Perhaps the sinner is visited with bereavements of a painful character—those that are near and dear to him are taken away. He is forcibly reminded by this of the insecurity of all earthly enjoyments—of the uncertainty of life—and of the necessity of looking out for another, a better, and a more enduring portion. And, while his mind is solemnized by such thoughts, Jesus is knocking at the door of his heart.

Are there sinners here at whose door Jesus has been knocking in one and in all of these ways, and who are still keeping him standing without ? O, what condescension, what grace, and what love have such been slighting and setting at nought ! With what folly, what infatuation, what sin, what wickedness, are not such chargeable ! They have thrown the door of their hearts open for the admission of their enemies ; but they have kept it fast shut, barred, and bolted against their truest and best Friend. They have admitted Satan ; but they have excluded the Lord of glory, the Son of God, the loving Jesus, the friend of sinners, the only Saviour. Tremble, O sinner, at the thought

of allowing the blessed Jesus to knock one knock more at thy heart in vain. The last knock will come, and, if thy heart be not opened then to admit him, thou art undone for eternity. He is knocking now, and, if thou wilt not hear his voice, and open the door, and let him in, he may cease knocking any more. And then, when thou shalt appear before his judgment seat, he will upbraid thee and condemn thee to everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power. He will say then, "I called, but ye refused; I stretched out my arm, but ye did not regard. I therefore now will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." But he is unwilling that it should come to this with any sinner at whose door he knocks. "As I live," he says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn unto me and live." And, when he leaves any to the hardness of their own hearts, in consequence of their obstinate rejection of him and his gracious offers, it is still with reluctance that he leaves them. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?"

V. But observe now, *farther*, what kind of persons they are at whose door the blessed Jesus knocks for admission. It is not at the door of the great, the rich, and the learned, to the neglect of the low, the poor, and the unlearned. Nor is it at the door of the low, the poor, and the unlearned, to the neglect of the great, the rich, and the learned. It is not at the door of the outwardly decent, and moral, and well behaved, to the neglect of the openly ungodly, and immoral, and profligate. Nor is it at the door of the openly ungodly, immoral, and profligate, to the neglect of the outwardly decent, and moral, and well behaved. It is not at the door of men of this class or of that class—of this character or of that character. It is at the door of all; for all stand equally in need of the blessings which he has to dispense, and he is equally ready to dispense them to all. He presses the blessings of his purchase, the blessings of salvation, upon all to whom he addresses his Gospel. To all to whom he sends his Gospel he says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." It is "**ANY** man" you see, dear friends, let him belong to this class or that class—let him be high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. It is "*any* man," let him have this character or that character. All men have, in reality, one character in the eye of God. They are all sinners, and, as such, are under the wrath and curse of God. And so, though some go greater lengths in sin than others, yet all stand equally in need of the loving and gracious offices

of the Redeemer ; and he is ready to perform these loving and gracious offices towards all alike. He is ready to come into the house of all alike, if they will but open the door and give him admission. And sometimes those whom we would judge the most unlikely, are the most ready and forward to do. This was the case when Jesus dwelt with men on earth. Addressing the chief priests and the elders of the Jews, he said, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you." It would be a great mistake, then, for any to suppose that they were too unworthy or too wicked for the blessed Jesus to knock at their door. It would be an equally great mistake for any to keep their door fast shut against him, because of any sense, while they may hear, of their unworthiness to receive him. O this expression, "Any man," is, indeed, a precious expression. The greatest sinner may with all manner of confidence lay hold of it. Inquiring sinner, this is a word for thee !—anxious sinner, this is a word for thee !—careless, prayerless sinner, this is a word for thee !—Sabbath profaner, this is a word for thee !—despiser of ordinances, this is a word for thee !—hater of God, this is a word for thee—scoffer and scorner, this is a word for thee !—adulterer, this is a word for thee !—fornicator, this is a word for thee !—drunkard, this is a word for thee !—profane swearer, this is a word for thee !—liar, this is a word for thee !—sinners of every age and of every grade, this a word for one and all of you ! All of you are included in the expression "Any man." And if any one of you, or all of you, will but draw the bars of the door of your hearts, and throw it wide open for his admission, he will come in and sup with you, and you with him. O sinner ! whoever thou art—young sinner or grey-headed sinner—Jesus presses himself upon thine acceptance. Embrace him as he is offered to thee in the Gospel—embrace him just as thou art, and without any farther delay, and all will instantly be well. Reject him, and we cannot say that thou wilt ever have another offer. Thine interests for eternity, O sinner, may at this very moment be as if they were quivering in the balance. Thou mayest be at the very point of ascending up into heaven, to be made for ever glorious and happy there, or of sinking down immediately into hell, to be made for ever wretched and miserable there.

But are any now disposed to open the door, and to welcome Christ into their hearts, but at a loss as to how they should proceed ? To such, we say, that Christ is the Saviour of sinners. It is at your heart, as at the hearts of sinners, that he knocks for admission. If you would open the door and receive him, you must do so as sinners. You must receive him for the purposes for which he has come to your door and knocked. You must know that you are sinners, and as such, deserving nothing at the hand of God but wrath for your sins. You must know that if you are to be

dealt with according to your deserts, you must utterly and eternally perish. And knowing that Jesus alone can save you, and that he is willing and waiting to save you, you must feel ready to put yourselves unreservedly into his hands, that he may save you in his own way. You must feel ready to say with all sincerity and truth, Lord save, else we perish. You must be willing to be justified, not in virtue of any righteousness of your own, but wholly in virtue of his righteousness. You must be willing to be sanctified, not by the power of any goodness of your own, but only through the power of his grace. You must be willing to go to heaven, shouting Grace, grace. In this state of mind, the bars and the bolts which kept the door of your hearts fast shut against Jesus have been withdrawn. And now let the door itself be thrown wide open for the admission of the blessed Jesus. Let it be the sincere desire of your hearts that he may come in, and fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. Ashamed, abased, mortified, and confounded, that you should have kept him standing knocking so long without, let him now have a free, a full, and a cordial admission. Say, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why standest thou without?—come in, blessed Jesus, and take full possession of my heart!

And will he stand out now, after knocking for admission—ay, after knocking, it may be, for many years for admission? No, there need be no ground for doubt or for fear as to this matter. If the door be really thrown open for admission, though it should be after he had knocked long, and after he had given the last knock which he intended to give before taking his departure, he will come in, and will put all to rights—make all well. He will come in, and be on as friendly terms with you as if you had opened immediately upon the first knock being given. “Behold,” says he, “I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.” I who am “the faithful and true witness,” I who am “the truth” itself, I say that I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.

There is no doubt, then, but that the blessed Jesus will come in, so soon as the heart of even the vilest, or the oldest, or the youngest sinner is open to receive him. And, as the *last* point to which we would advert, we remark,

VI. That, having come in, he will live upon the most friendly terms with such a sinner. He intimates this, he gives assurance of this, in the plainest terms, in the text. I will come in, says he, and sup with him, and he with me. O what an honour is conferred upon the man or woman who has such a visitor, who has such a guest!

But where has the poor sinner anything fitted to entertain this divine visitor—anything to set before him, of which he can partake? He has indeed nothing at all. But still the means of entertainment are abundantly provided. Jesus brings all along with him.

He brings along with him that which suits the case of the sinner—upon which he sups, upon which he feasts. He brings along with him all the blessings of his salvation, which are, indeed, to the soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a rich spiritual feast, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines upon the lees—of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. He brings along with him light to enlighten the darkened understanding. He brings along with him grace to renew the depraved heart. He brings along with him mercy to pardon all sin. He brings along with him a righteousness which is sufficient to give the vilest sinner acceptance with God. He brings along with him all that is needed to the sanctification of the soul, and its meekness for another and a better world than this. He brings along with him many and precious promises, referring both to the life which now is and to that which is to come. He assures all who receive him of a complete triumph over all their spiritual enemies—over the devil, the world, and the flesh—over death, and hell, and the grave. He assures them that when the earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved, they shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. What a rich spiritual feast, for the sinner, is there not in all this? And Jesus brings all this along with him into the heart of every sinner which is opened to receive him. The sinner, so soon as he receives Jesus into his heart, knows him as the heavenly manna, as the bread of life, the bread which came down from above, of which, if a man eat, he shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; and he feeds daily upon him by faith. He confides his all into his hands. He rejoices in him as his wisdom, his righteousness, his sanctification, and redemption. He rejoices in him as all his salvation and all his desire.

But Jesus himself enjoys a feast when he is admitted into the hearts of the sinful children of men. Scripture frequently represents our Saviour as preparing a feast for his people, and inviting sinners to come and partake of it; but there is this peculiarity in the present passage, that it represents him as if expecting sinners to prepare a feast for him, and promising to be their guest. He sups with them as well as they with him. And upon what is it that he sups or feasts? Why, brethren, it is just upon what he sees of the travail of his soul, when sinners admit him into their hearts—make him the objects of their faith, their trust, their confidence, and their love—give themselves up to be saved by him, to be washed in his blood, justified through his righteousness, and sanc-

tified by his grace. Oh, he has unspeakable satisfaction and delight in saving sinners, and in seeing the graces of the Christian character forming in them—in seeing old things passing away, and all things becoming new—in seeing them growing up into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in glory. Brethren, he has in this just the joy that was set before him, and for which he endured the cross, despising the shame. And with what measure can we measure this joy? It must be ineffable, it must be infinite. Think of the sacrifice which he had to offer up before it could be realized. He had to pour out his precious blood for its realization. And it is for its realization that he still condescends to stand knocking at the door of the sinner's heart for admission. Oh, it must be with infinite satisfaction and delight that Jesus sees sinners fleeing to him for refuge, and committing their everlasting all into his hands. And oh, how must he love them, and delight in them, as he sees them, through the agency of his Spirit, becoming like unto himself, and ripening for glory? As there is no love amongst the children of men with which that love of his, which led him to lay down his life for his people, may be compared, so there is no love amongst them with which his love towards them, as he sees them becoming meet for the inheritance of the saints in glory, may be compared. It is tender and strong love that a mother feels towards her infant child, but that love is far surpassed by this love of Jesus towards his people. He says, can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand.

Thus it is, brethren, where Jesus finds admission into the hearts of sinners. They sup with him, he with them. The most friendly intercourse and communion subsists between them. They regard each other with delightful emotion and affection. Each is the beloved of the other. Each is the portion and the inheritance of the other. Each is the habitation of the other. The believer dwells in Jesus, and Jesus dwells in the believer. And because Jesus lives, the believer shall live also. Because Jesus reigns, the believer shall reign also.

And now, brethren, in conclusion, know that Jesus has been knocking at the heart of each one of you this day for admission. There is no sinner present at whose door Jesus has not this day been knocking for admission. And if there be any who are still keeping the door fast shut and keeping him out, there will be witnesses against them. What does the first word of the text mean—the word *behold*? Does it not mean that Jesus, when he came to knock this day at your heart for admission, summoned witnesses who might testify to this fact, and against such as should refuse to receive him? Yes, there will be witnesses to

testify against such as sin against their own souls this day, by shutting out Jesus. If none else were to be found, the very stone would cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber would answer it.

But let there be none such amongst you—none against whom either angels, or ministers, or elders, or fellow-communicants, or any other, shall need to be called as witnesses at the Last Day. Let each and all open their hearts wide, that the blessed Jesus may come in. O what a matter of wonder is it that such a person should seek to become the guest of any of us. It will be a matter of never-failing and never-fading wonder, and gratitude, and joy, and praise, throughout eternity, to such of us as give him admission. And the folly, the infatuation, the sin, the wickedness of those who refuse him admission, who allow him to knock until he takes his departure, until he leaves them to themselves, to perish in their sins, will be a matter of never-failing wonder, amazement, and anguish to themselves in hell. O let not Him have it to say, in reference to any of you, as he had to say in reference to ancient Israel, "All day long I have stretched out my hand to a gainsaying and disobedient people." Let him not have it to say, "I knocked and called, and knocked and called, but it was all in vain. Ye would neither hearken nor consider. Ye would have none of me. So I gave you up to your own heart's lusts. So I left you to eat of the fruit of your own doings. I left you to perish in your sins. And you must now go away into everlasting punishment. There is no help for it now. The day of grace is past!"

Brethren, you who have heard the blessed Jesus knocking and crying without, and who have opened the door and given him admission, are a highly honoured and a happy people. What a treasure of blessing has he not brought along with him into your souls? The pardon of all sin, peace with God, purifying grace, and bright and glorious prospects beyond death and the grave. Now ye are the children of the great King—members of the truly royal family—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. To as many of you as have received him, he has given power to become the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Live, then, dear brethren, up to your distinguished privileges and glorious prospects. Sup daily with Jesus—feed daily upon him by faith—"open your mouths wide, he will fill them." Seek especially to realize this communion with him at his table, in the ordinance of the Holy Supper. The communion, which Christ's people have with him at his table, is just that communion of which the text speaks—the communion of the soul with an indwelling Saviour. Sinners whose hearts are still barred against

him, and whose ears are still deaf to his call, may no doubt take their places at the table, and sit there as God's people sit, but they can have no communion with Christ—they can have no communion with him so long as he stands without. Only they who have opened the door and received him into their hearts sup with him, and have their souls "satisfied as with marrow and with fatness." Strive, then, to enjoy his presence with you, yea, pray to be gladdened by the presence and power of his Spirit in you when you encompass his table. And, oh! strive to attain to a blessed hope, and to live in a blessed and well-grounded assurance of sitting down with him above at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. For the communion with himself, to which in the text he promises to admit his people, will be enjoyed in its highest measure only in heaven itself. Then the saint's joy in Christ, and his joy in them, will be full. "He shall sup with them and they with him." If you have opened your hearts to him, you will without fail be among that blessed company, sharers in their joy. Nay, if you have opened your hearts to Christ, you have already had a foretaste of this heavenly supper—you have already known, in some measure, however small, what it is to sup with Jesus, and to have him supping with you. Oh! then, if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, be encouraged, and animated by your experience of his graciousness, and your assurance of his faithfulness, to live so as to realize uninterruptedly his fellowship here, and to be prepared more fully for his presence above. Cultivate assiduously all the graces of the Christian character. Strive to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Strive after the perfection of the saints in glory. And thus will you daily enjoy more and more delight in Christ, and give Jesus more and more reason for delighting himself in you. And when the set and proper time has arrived, which will be ere long, in the course of a few brief years at the most, he will come and take you to himself, so that where he is there ye also shall for ever be. And, now, the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

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